

*IN THE
DAYS OF MY YOUTH.*



*BY THE AUTHOR OF
BARBARA'S HISTORY.*

Lacy Reushaw

The doggie to his owner.

A. B. L.
Christians - 1872

IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH.

VOL. I.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
Duke University Libraries

IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF

“BARBARA’S HISTORY,”

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1873.

The right of Translation is reserved.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL,
BLENHEIM HOUSE.

IN THE DAYS OF MY YOUTH.

CHAPTER I.

My Birthplace and Parentage.

Dolce sentier,
Colle, che mi piacesti,
Ov'ancor per usanza amor mi mena!

PETRARCH.



WEET, secluded, shady Saxonholme !
I doubt if our whole England contains another hamlet so quaint, so picturesquely irregular, so thoroughly national in all its rustic characteristics. It lies in a warm hollow environed by hills. Woods, parks, and young plantations clothe every height and slope for miles around, whilst here and there, peeping down through green vistas, or towering above undulating seas of summer foliage, stands many a fine old

country mansion, turretted and gabled, and built of that warm red brick that seems to hold the light of the sunset long after it has faded from the rest of the landscape. A silver thread of streamlet, swift but shallow, runs noisily through the meadows beside the town and loses itself in the Chad, about a mile and a half farther eastward. Many a picturesque old wooden bridge, many a foaming weir and ruinous water-mill with weedy wheel, may be found scattered up and down the wooded banks of this little river Chad; while to the brook, which we call the Gipstream, attaches a vague tradition of trout.

The hamlet itself is clean and old-fashioned, consisting of one long, straggling street, and a few tributary lanes and passages. The houses some few years back were mostly long and low-fronted, with projecting upper storeys, and diamond-paned bay-windows bowered in with myrtle and clematis; but modern improvements have done much of late to sweep away these antique tenements, and a fine new suburb of Italian and Gothic villas has sprung up between the town and

the railway station. Besides this, we have a new church in the mediæval style, rich in gilding and colours and thirteenth-century brass-work; and a new cemetery, laid out like a pleasure-garden; and a new school-house, where the children are taught upon a system with a foreign name; and a Mechanics Institute, where London professors come down at long intervals to expound popular science, and where agriculturists meet to discuss popular grievances.

At the other extremity of the town, down by Girdlestone Grange, an old moated residence where the squire's family have resided these four centuries past, we are full fifty years behind our modern neighbours. Here stands our famous old "King's-head Inn," a well-known place of resort so early as the reign of Elizabeth. The great oak beside the porch is as old as the house itself; and on the windows of a little disused parlour overlooking the garden may still be seen the names of Sedley, Rochester, and other wits of the Restoration. They scrawled those autographs after dinner, most likely, with

their diamond rings, and went reeling afterwards, arm-in-arm, along the village street, singing and swearing, and eager for adventures—as gentlemen were wont to be in those famous old times when they drank the king's health more freely than was good for their own.

Not far from the “King's Head,” and almost hidden by the trees which divide it from the road, stands an ancient charitable institution called the College—quadrangular, mullion-windowed, many-gabled, and colonised by some twenty aged people of both sexes. At the back of the College, adjoining a space of waste ground and some ruined cloisters, lies the churchyard, in the midst of which, surrounded by solemn yews and mouldering tombs, stands the Priory Church. It is a rare old church, founded, according to the county history, in the reign of Edward the Confessor, and entered with a full description in Domesday Book. Its sculptured monuments and precious brasses, its Norman crypt, carved stalls, and tattered banners drooping over faded scutcheons, tell all of

generations long gone by, of noble families extinct, of gallant deeds forgotten, of knights and ladies remembered only by the names above their graves. Amongst these, some two or three modest tablets record the passing away of several generations of my own predecessors—obscure professional men for the most part, of whom some few became soldiers, and died abroad.

In close proximity to the church stands the vicarage, once the Priory; a quaint old rambling building surrounded by magnificent old trees. Here for long centuries, a tribe of rooks have held undisputed possession, filling the boughs with their nests and the air with their voices, and, like genuine lords of the soil, descending at their own grave will and pleasure upon the adjacent lands.

Picturesque and mediæval as all these old buildings and old associations help to make us, we of Saxonholme pretend to something more. We claim to be, not only picturesque, but historic. Nay, more than this—we are classical. WE WERE FOUNDED BY THE

ROMANS. A great Roman road, well known to antiquaries, passed transversely through the old churchyard. Roman coins and relics, and fragments of tessellated pavement, have been found in and about the town. Roman camps may be traced on most of the heights around. Above all, we are said to be indebted to the Romans for that inestimable breed of poultry in right of which we have for years carried off the leading prizes at every poultry-show in the county, and have even been enabled to make head against the exaggerated pretensions of modern Cochin-China interlopers.

Such, briefly sketched, is my native Saxon-holme. Born beneath the shade of its towering trees and overhanging eaves, brought up to reverence its antiquities, and educated in the love of its natural beauties, what wonder that I cling to it with every fibre of my heart, and even when affecting to smile at my own fond prejudice, continue to believe it the loveliest and peace fullest nook in rural England?

My father's name was John Arbuthnot.

Sprung from the Arbuthnots of Montrose, we claim to derive from a common ancestor with the celebrated author of "*Martinus Scriblerus*." Indeed, the first of our name who settled at Saxonholme was one James Arbuthnot, son to a certain nonjuring parson Arbuthnot who lived and died abroad, and was own brother to that famous wit, physician, and courtier whose genius, my father was wont to say, conferred a higher distinction upon our branch of the family than did those Royal Letters Patent whereby the elder stock was ennobled by His most Gracious Majesty King George the Fourth, on the occasion of his visit to Edinburgh in 1823. From this James Arbuthnot (who, being born and bred at St. Omer, and married, moreover, to a French wife, was himself half a Frenchman) we Saxonholme Arbuthnots were the direct descendants.

Our French ancestress, according to the family tradition, was of no very exalted origin, being in fact the only daughter and heiress of one Monsieur Tartine, Perruquier in chief at the Court of Versailles. But

what this lady wanted in birth, she made up in fortune, and the modest estate which her husband purchased with her dowry came down to us unimpaired through five generations. In the substantial and somewhat foreign-looking red-brick house which he built (also, doubtless, with Madame's Louis d'ors) we, his successors, had lived and died ever since. His portrait, together with the portraits of his wife, son, and grandson, hung on the dining-room walls; and of the quaint old spindle-legged chairs and tables that had adorned our best rooms from time immemorial, some were supposed to date as far back as the first founding and furnishing of the house.

It is almost needless to say that the son of the non-juror and his immediate posterity were staunch Jacobites, one and all. I am not aware that they ever risked or suffered anything for the cause; but they were not therefore the less vehement. Many were the signs and tokens of that dead-and-gone political faith which these loyal Arbuthnots left behind them. In the bedrooms there

hung prints of King James the Second at the Battle of the Boyne; of the Royal Martyr with his plumed hat, lace collar, and melancholy fatal face; of the Old and Young Pretenders; of the Princess Louisa Teresia, and of the Cardinal York. In the library were to be found all kinds of books relating to the career of that unhappy family: "Y^e Tragicall History of y^e Stuarts, 1697," "Memoirs of King James II., writ by his own hand;" "La Stuartide," an unfinished epic in the French language by one Jean de Schelandre; "The Fate of Majesty exemplified in the barbarous and disloyal treatment (by traitorous and undutiful subjects) of the Kings and Queens of the Royal House of Stuart;" genealogies of the Stuarts in English, French, and Latin; a fine copy of "Eikon Basilike," bound in old red morocco, with the royal arms stamped upon the cover; and many other volumes on the same subject, the names of which (although as a boy I was wont to pore over their contents with profound awe and sympathy) I have now for the most part forgotten.

•

Most persons, I suppose, have observed how the example of a successful ancestor is apt to determine the pursuits of his descendants down to the third and fourth generations, inclining the lads of this house to the sea, and of that to the bar, according as the great man of the family achieved his honours on ship-board, or climbed his way to the woolsack. The Arbuthnots offered no exception to this very natural law of selection. They could not help remembering how the famous doctor had excelled in literature as in medicine; how he had been not only Physician in Ordinary to Queen Anne and Prince George of Denmark, but a satirist and pamphleteer, a wit and the friend of wits—of such wits as Pope and Swift, Harley and Bolingbroke. Hence they took, as it were instinctively, to physic and the *belles lettres*, and were never without a doctor or an author in the family.

My father, however, like the great Martinus Scriblerus, was both doctor and author. And he was a John Arbuthnot. And to carry the resemblance still further, he was

gifted with a vein of rough epigrammatic humour, in which it pleased his independence to indulge without much respect of persons, times, or places. His tongue, indeed, cost him some friends and gained him some enemies; but I am not sure that it diminished his popularity as a physician. People compared him to Abernethy, whereby he was secretly flattered. Some even went so far as to argue that only a very clever man could afford to be a bear; and I must say that he pushed this conclusion to its farthest limit, showing his temper alike to rich and poor upon no provocation whatever. He cared little, to be sure, for his connection. He loved the profession theoretically, and from a scientific point of view; but he disliked the drudgery of country practice, and stood in no need of its hardly-earned profits. Yet he was a man who so loved to indulge his humour, no matter at what cost, that I doubt whether he would have been more courteous had his bread depended on it. As it was, he practised and grumbled, snarled at his patients, quar-

relled with the rich, bestowed his time and money liberally upon the poor, and amused his leisure by writing for a variety of scientific periodicals, both English and foreign.

Our home stood at the corner of a lane towards the Eastern extremity of the town, commanding a view of the Squire's Park and a glimpse of the mill-pool and meadows in the valley beyond. This lane led up to Barnard's Green, a breezy space of high, uneven ground dedicated to fairs, cricket matches, and travelling circuses, whence the noisy music of brass bands, and the echoes of alternate laughter and applause, were wafted past our windows in the summer evenings. We had a large garden at the back, and a stable up the lane; and though the house was but one storey in height, it covered a considerable space of ground, and contained more rooms than we ever had occasion to use. Thus it happened that since my mother's death, which took place when I was a very little boy, many doors on the upper floor were kept locked, to the undue development of my natural inquisitiveness

by day, and my mortal terror when sent to bed at night. In one of these her portrait still hung above the mantelpiece, and her harp stood in its accustomed corner. In another, which was once her bedroom, everything was left as in her lifetime ; her clothes yet hanging in the wardrobe, her dressing-case standing upon the toilet, her favourite book upon the table beside the bed. These things, told to me by the servants with much mystery, took a powerful hold upon my childish imagination. I trembled as I passed the closed doors at dusk, and listened fearfully outside when daylight gave me courage to linger near them. Something of my mother's presence, I fancied, must yet dwell within—something in her shape still wander from room to room in the dim moonlight, and echo back the sighing of the night-winds. Alas ! I could not remember her. Now and then, as if recalled by a dream, some broken and shadowy images of a pale face and a slender hand floated vaguely through my mind ; but faded even as I strove to realise them. Some-

times, too, when I was falling off to sleep in my little bed, or making out pictures in the fire on a winter evening, strange fragments of old rhymes seemed to come back upon me, mingled with the tones of a soft voice and the haunting of a long-forgotten melody. But these, after all, were yearnings more of the heart than the memory :—

“ I felt a mother-want about the world,
And still went seeking.”

To return to my description of my early home :—the two rooms on either side of the hall, facing the road, were appropriated by my father for his surgery and consulting-room ; while the two corresponding rooms at the back were fitted up as our general reception-room, and my father's bed-room. In the former of these, and in the weedy old garden upon which it opened, were passed all the days of my boyhood.

It was my father's good will and pleasure to undertake the sole charge of my education. Fain would I have gone like other lads of my age to public school and college ; but on this point, as on most others, he was

inflexible. Himself an obscure physician in a remote country town, he brought me up with no other view than to be his own successor. The profession was not to my liking. Somewhat contemplative and nervous by nature, there were few pursuits for which I was less fitted. I knew this, but dared not oppose him. Loving study for its own sake, and trusting to the future for some lucky turn of destiny, I yielded to that which seemed inevitable, and strove to make the best of it.

Thus it came to pass that I lived a quiet, hard-working home life, while other boys of my age were going through the joyous experience of school, and chose my companions from the dusty shelves of some three or four gigantic book-cases, instead of from the class and the playground. Not that I regret it. I believe, on the contrary, that a boy may have worse companions than books and busts, employments less healthy than the study of anatomy, and amusements more pernicious than Shakespeare and Horace. Thank heaven ! I escaped all such ; and if,

as I have been told, my boyhood was unboyish, and my youth prematurely cultivated, I am content to have been spared the dangers in exchange for the pleasures of a public school.

I do not, however, pretend to say that I did not sometimes pine for the recreations common to my age. Well do I remember the manifold attractions of Barnard's Green. What longing glances I used to steal towards the boisterous cricketers, when going gravely forth upon a botanical walk with my father! With what eager curiosity have I not lingered many a time before the entrance to a forbidden booth, and scanned the scenic advertisement of a travelling show! Alas! how the charms of study paled before those intervals of brief but bitter temptation! What, then, was pathology compared to the pig-faced Lady, or the *Materia Medica* to Smith's Mexican Circus patronised by all the Sovereigns of Europe? But my father was inexorable. He held that such places were, to use his own words, "opened by swindlers for the ruin of fools," and from one never-

to-be-forgotten hour, when he caught me in the very act of taking out my pennyworth at a portable peep-show, he bound me over by a solemn promise (sealed by a whipping) never to repeat the offence under any provocation or pretext whatsoever. I was a tiny fellow in pinafores when this happened, but having once pledged my word, I kept it faithfully through all the studious years that lay between six and sixteen.

At sixteen an immense crisis occurred in my life. I fell in love. I had been in love several times before—chiefly with the elder pupils at the Miss Andrews' Establishment; and once (but that was when I was very young indeed) with the cook. This, however, was a much more romantic and desperate affair. The lady was a Columbine by profession, and as beautiful as an angel. She came down to our neighbourhood with a strolling company, and performed every evening in a temporary theatre on the Green for nearly three weeks. I used to steal out after dinner when my father was taking his nap, and run the whole way, that I might be

in time to see the object of my adoration walking up and down the platform outside the booth before the performances commenced. This incomparable creature wore a blue petticoat spangled with tinfoil, and a wreath of faded poppies. Her age might have been about forty. I thought her the loveliest of created beings. I wrote sonnets to her—dozens of them—intending to leave them at the theatre door, but never finding the courage to do it. I made up bouquets for her, over and over again, chosen from the best flowers in our neglected garden; but invariably with the same result. I hated the Harlequin who presumed to put his arm about her waist. I envied the Clown, whom she condescended to address as Mr. Merriman. In short, I was so desperately in love that I even tried to lie awake at night and lose my appetite; but, I am ashamed to own, failed signally in both endeavours.

At length I wrote to her. I can even now recall passages out of that passionate epistle. I well remember how it took me

a whole morning to write it ; how I crammed it with quotations from Horace ; and how I fondly compared her to most of the mythological divinities. I then copied it out on pale pink paper, folded it in the form of a heart, directed it to Miss Angelina Lascelles, and left it, about dusk, with the money-taker at the pit door. I signed myself, if I remember rightly, Pyramus. What would I not have given that evening to pay my sixpence like the rest of the audience, and feast my eyes upon her from some obscure corner ! What would I not have given to add my quota to the applause !

I could hardly sleep that night ; I could hardly read, or write, or eat my breakfast the next morning, for thinking of my letter and its probable effect. It never once occurred to me that my Angelina might possibly find it difficult to construe Horace. Towards evening, I escaped again, and flew to Barnard's Green. It wanted nearly an hour to the time of performance ; but the tuning of a violin was audible from within, and the money-taker was already there with his pipe

in his mouth and his hands in his pockets. I had no courage to address that functionary; but I lingered in his sight and sighed audibly, and wandered round and round the canvas walls that hedged my divinity. Presently he took his pipe out of his mouth and his hands out of his pockets; surveyed me deliberately from head to foot, and said:—

“Hollo there! aint you the party that brought a three-cornered letter here last evening?”

I owned it, falteringly.

He lifted a fold in the canvas, and gave me a gentle shove between the shoulders.

“Then you’re to go in,” said he, shortly. “She’s there, somewhere. You’re sure to find her.”

The canvas dropped behind me, and I found myself inside. My heart beat so fast that I could scarcely breathe. The booth was almost dark; the curtain was down; and a gentleman with striped legs was lighting the footlamps. On the front pit bench next the orchestra, discussing a plate of

bread and meat and the contents of a brown jug, sat a stout man in shirt-sleeves and a woman in a cotton gown. The woman rose as I made my appearance, and asked, civilly enough, whom I pleased to want.

I stammered the name of Miss Angelina Lascelles.

“Miss Lascelles!” she repeated. “I am Miss Lascelles.” Then, looking at me more narrowly, “I suppose,” she added, “you are the little boy that brought the letter?”

The little boy that brought the letter! Gracious heavens! And this middle-aged woman in a cotton gown—was she the Angelina of my dreams? The booth went round with me, and the lights danced before my eyes.

“If you have come for an answer,” she continued, “you may just say to your Mr. Pyramid that I am a respectable married woman, and he ought to be ashamed of himself—and, as for his letter, I never read such a heap of nonsense in my life! There, you can go out by the way you came in, and

if you take my advice, you won't come back again !”

How I looked, what I said, how I made my exit, whether the door-keeper spoke to me as I passed, I have no idea to this day. I only know that I flung myself on the dewy grass under a great tree in the first field I came to, and shed tears of such shame, disappointment, and wounded pride, as my eyes had never known before. She had called me a little boy, and my letter a heap of nonsense ! She was elderly—she was ignorant—she was married ! I had been a fool ; but that knowledge came too late, and was not consolatory.

By-and-by, while I was yet sobbing and disconsolate, I heard the drumming and fifing which heralded the appearance of the *Corps Dramatique* on the outer platform. I resolved to see her for the last time. I pulled my hat over my eyes, went back to the Green, and mingled with the crowd outside the booth. It was growing dusk. I made my way to the foot of the ladder, and observed her narrowly. I saw that her

ankles were thick, and her elbows red. The illusion was all over. The spangles had lost their lustre, and the poppies their glow. I no longer hated the harlequin, or envied the clown, or felt anything but mortification at my own folly.

“Miss Angelina Lascelles, indeed!” I said to myself, as I sauntered moodily home. “Pshaw! I shouldn’t wonder if her name was Snooks!”

CHAPTER II.


The Little Chevalier.

A mere anatomy, a mountebank,
A threadbare juggler.

Comedy of Errors.

Nay, then, he is a conjuror.

Henry VI.

Y adventure with Miss Lascelles did me good service, and cured me for some time, at least, of my leaning towards the tender passion. I consequently devoted myself more closely than ever to my studies—indulged in a passing mania for genealogy and heraldry—began a collection of local geological specimens, all of which I threw away at the end of the first fortnight—and took to rearing rabbits in an old tumble-down summer-house at the end of

the garden. I believe that from somewhere about this time I may also date the commencement of a great epic poem in blank verse, and heaven knows how many cantos, which was to be called the Columbiad. It began, I remember, with a description of the Court of Ferdinand and Isabella, and the departure of Columbus, and was intended to celebrate the discovery, colonization, and subsequent history of America. I never got beyond ten or a dozen pages of the first canto, however, and that Transatlantic epic remains unfinished to this day.

The great event which I have recorded in the preceding chapter took place in the early summer. It must, therefore, have been towards the close of autumn in the same year when my next important adventure befell. This time the temptation assumed a different shape.

Coming briskly homewards one fine frosty morning after having left a note at the Vicarage, I saw a bill-sticker at work upon a line of dead wall which at that time reached from the Red Lion Inn to the corner

of Pitcairn's Lane. His posters were printed in enormous type, and decorated with a florid bordering in which the signs of the zodiac conspicuously figured. Being somewhat idly disposed, I followed the example of other passers-by, and lingered to watch the process and read the advertisement. It ran as follows:—

MAGIC AND MYSTERY! MAGIC AND MYSTERY!

M. LE CHEVALIER ARMAND PROUDHINE,
(of Paris) surnamed

THE WIZARD OF THE CAUCASUS,

Has the honour to announce to the Nobility and Gentry of
Saxonholme and its vicinity, that he will, to-morrow
evening, (October —, 18—) hold his First

SOIRÉE FANTASTIQUE

IN

THE LARGE ROOM OF THE RED LION HOTEL.

ADMISSION 1s. RESERVED SEATS, 2s. 6d.

To commence at Seven.

N.B.—*The performance will include a variety of new and surprising feats of Legerdemain never before exhibited.*

A soirée fantastique ! what would I not give to be present at a *soirée fantastique !* I had read of the Rosicrucians, of Count Cagliostro, and of Doctor Dee. I had peeped into more than one curious treatise on Demonology, and I fancied there could be nothing in the world half so marvellous as that last surviving branch of the Black Art entitled the Science of Legerdemain.

What if, for this once, I were to ask leave to be present at the performance? Should I do so with even the remotest chance of success? It was easier to propound this momentous question than to answer it. My father, as I have already said, disapproved of public entertainments, and his prejudices were tolerably inveterate. But then, what could be more genteel than the programme, or more select than the prices? How different was an entertainment given in the large room of the Red Lion Hotel to a three-penny wax-work, or a strolling circus on Barnard's Green! I had made one of the audience in that very room over and over

again when the Vicar read his celebrated "Discourses to Youth," or Dr. Dunks came down from Grinstead to deliver an explosive lecture on chemistry; and I had always seen the reserved seats filled by the best families in the neighbourhood. Fully persuaded of the force of my own arguments, I made up my mind to prefer this tremendous request on the first favourable opportunity; and so hurried home, with my head full of quite other thoughts than usual.

My father was sitting at the table with a mountain of books and papers before him. He looked up sharply as I entered, jerked his chair round so as to get the light at his back, put on his spectacles, and ejaculated:—

"Well, sir!"

This was a bad sign, and one with which I was only too familiar. Nature had intended my father for a barrister. He was an adept in all the arts of intimidation, and would have conducted a cross-examination to perfection. As it was, he indulged in a good deal of amateur practice, and from the moment when he turned his back to the

light and donned the inexorable spectacles, there was not a soul in the house, from myself down to the errand-boy, who was not perfectly aware of something unpleasant to follow.

“Well, sir!” he repeated, rapping impatiently upon the table with his knuckles.

Having nothing to reply to this greeting, I looked out of the window and remained silent; whereby, unfortunately, I irritated him still more.

“Confound you, sir!” he exclaimed, “have you nothing to say?”

“Nothing,” I replied, doggedly.

“Stand there!” he said, pointing to a particular square in the pattern of the carpet.

“Stand there!”

I obeyed.

“And now, perhaps, you will have the goodness to explain what you have been about this morning; and why it should have taken you just thirty-seven minutes by the clock to accomplish a journey which a tortoise—yes, sir, a tortoise,—might have done in less than ten?”

I gravely compared my watch with the clock before replying.

"Upon my word, sir," I said, "your tortoise would have the advantage of me."

"The advantage of you! What do you mean by the advantage of you, you affected puppy?"

"I had no idea," said I, provokingly, "that you were in unusual haste this morning."

"Haste!" shouted my father. "I never said I was in haste. I never choose to be in haste. I hate haste!"

"Then why"

"Because you have been wasting your time and mine, sir," interrupted he. "Because I will not permit you to go idling and vagabondizing about the village."

My *sang froid* was gone directly.

"Idling and vagabondizing!" I repeated angrily. "I have done nothing of the kind. I defy you to prove it. When have you known me forget that I am a gentleman?"

"Humph!" growled my father, mollified

but sarcastic; “a pretty gentleman—a gentleman of sixteen!”

“It is true,” I continued, without heeding the interruption, “that I lingered for a moment to read a placard by the way; but if you will take the trouble, sir, to inquire at the Rectory, you will find that I waited a quarter of an hour before I could send up your letter.”

My father grinned and rubbed his hands. If there was one thing in the world that aggravated him more than another, it was to find his fire opposed to ice. Let him, however, succeed in igniting his adversary, and he was in a good humour directly.

“Come, come, Basil,” said he, taking off his spectacles, “I never said you were not a good lad. Go to your books, boy—go to your books; and this evening I will examine you in vegetable physiology.”

Silently, but not sullenly, I drew a chair to the table, and resumed my work. We were both satisfied, because each in his heart considered himself the victor. My father was amused at having irritated me, whereas

I was content because he had, in some sort, withdrawn the expressions that annoyed me. Hence we both became good-tempered, and, according to our own tacit fashion, continued during the rest of that morning to be rather more than usually sociable.

Hours passed thus—hours of quiet study, during which the quick travelling of a pen or the occasional turning of a page alone disturbed the silence. The warm sunlight which shone in so greenly through the vine leaves, stole, inch by inch, round the broken vases in the garden beyond, and touched their brown mosses with a golden bloom. The patient shadow on the antique sundial wound its way imperceptibly from left to right, and long slanting threads of light and shadow pierced in time between the branches of the poplars. Our mornings were long, for we rose early and dined late; and while my father paid professional visits, I devoted my hours to study. It rarely happened that he could thus spend a whole day among his books. Just as the clock struck four, however, there came a ring at the bell.

My father settled himself obstinately in his chair.

“If that’s a gratis patient,” said he, between his teeth, “I’ll not stir. From eight to ten are their hours, confound them!”

“If you please, sir,” said Mary, peeping in, “if you please, sir, it’s a gentleman.”

“A stranger?” asked my father.

Mary nodded, put her hand to her mouth, and burst into an irrepressible giggle.

“If you please, sir,” she began—but could get no farther.

My father was in a towering passion directly.

“Is the girl mad?” he shouted. “What is the meaning of this buffoonery?”

“Oh, sir—if you please, sir,” ejaculated Mary, struggling with terror and laughter together, “it’s the gentleman, sir. He—he says, if you please, sir, that his name is Almond Pudding!”

“Your pardon, Mademoiselle,” said a plaintive voice. “Armand Proudhine—le Chevalier Armand Proudhine, at your service.”

Mary disappeared with her apron to her mouth, and subsided into distant peals of laughter, leaving the Chevalier standing in the doorway.

He was a very little man, with a pinched and melancholy countenance, and an eye as wistful as a dog's. His threadbare clothes, made in the fashion of a dozen years before, had been decently mended in many places. A paste pin in a faded cravat, and a jaunty cane with a pinchbeck top, betrayed that he was still somewhat of a beau. His scant grey hair was tied behind with a piece of black ribbon, and he carried his hat under his arm, after the fashion of Elliston and the Prince Regent, as one sees them in the coloured prints of fifty years ago.

He advanced a step, bowed, and laid his card upon the table.

"I believe," he said in his plaintive voice, and imperfect English, "that I have the honour to introduce myself to Monsieur Arbuthnot."

"If you want me, sir," said my father, gruffly, "I am Doctor Arbuthnot."

“And I, Monsieur,” said the little Frenchman, laying his hand upon his heart, and bowing again—“I am the Wizard of the Caucasus.”

“The what?” exclaimed my father.

“The Wizard of the Caucasus,” replied our visitor, impressively.

There was an awkward pause, during which my father looked at me and touched his forehead significantly with his fore-finger; while the Chevalier, embarrassed between his natural timidity and his desire to appear of importance, glanced from one face to the other, and waited for a reply. I hastened to disentangle the situation.

“I think I can explain this gentleman’s meaning,” I said. “Monsieur le Chevalier will perform to-morrow evening in the large room of the Red Lion Hotel. He is a professor of legerdemain.”

“Of the marvellous art of legerdemain, Monsieur Arbuthnot,” interrupted the Chevalier, eagerly. “Prestidigitateur to the Court of Sachsenhausen, and successor to Al Hakim, the wise. It is I, Monsieur, that have invent

the famous *tour du pistolet*; it is I, that have originate the great and surprising deception of the bottle; it is I whom the world does surname the Wizard of the Caucasus. *Me voici !*"

Carried away by the force of his own eloquence, the Chevalier fell into an attitude at the conclusion of his little speech; but remembering where he was, blushed, and bowed again.

"Pshaw," said my father impatiently, "the man's a conjuror."

The little Frenchman did not hear him. He was at that moment untying a packet which he carried in his hat, the contents whereof appeared to consist of a number of very small pink and yellow cards. Selecting a couple of each colour, he deposited his hat carefully upon the floor and came a few steps nearer to the table.

"Monsieur will give me the hope to see him, with Monsieur *son fils*, at my Soirée Fantastique, *n'est ce pas ?*" he asked, timidly.

"Sir," said my father shortly, "I never encourage peripatetic mendicity."

The little Frenchman looked puzzled.

“*Comment?*” said he, and glanced to me for an explanation.

“I am very sorry, Monsieur,” I interposed hastily; “but my father objects to public entertainments.”

“*Ah, mon Dieu!* but not to this,” cried the Chevalier, raising his hands and eyes in deprecating astonishment. “Not to my *Soirée Fantastique!* The art of *legerdemain*, Monsieur, is not immoral. He is graceful—he is surprising—he is innocent; and, Monsieur, he is patronised by the Church; he is patronised by your amiable *Curé*, Monsieur le Docteur Brand.”

“Oh, father,” I exclaimed, “Dr. Brand has taken tickets!”

“And pray, sir, what’s that to me?” growled my father, without looking up from the book which he had ungraciously resumed. “Let Dr. Brand make a fool of himself, if he pleases. I’m not bound to do the same.”

The Chevalier blushed crimson—not with humility this time, but with pride. He gathered the cards into his pocket, took up

his hat, and saying stiffly—" *Monsieur, je vous demande pardon,*"—moved towards the door.

On the threshold he paused, and turning towards me with an air of faded dignity:—"Young gentleman," he said, "*you* I thank for your politeness."

He seemed as if he would have said more—hesitated—became suddenly livid—put his hand to his head, and leaned for support against the wall.

My father was up and beside him in an instant. We carried rather than led him to the sofa, untied his cravat, and administered the necessary restoratives. He was all but insensible for some moments. Then the colour came back to his lips, and he sighed heavily.

"An attack of the nerves," he said, shaking his head feebly. "An attack of the nerves, Messieurs."

My father looked doubtful.

"Are you often taken in this way?" he asked, with unusual gentleness.

"*Mais oui*, Monsieur," admitted the

Frenchman, reluctantly. "He does often arrive to me. Not—not that he is dangerous. Ah, bah! *Pas du tout!*"

"Humph!" ejaculated my father, more doubtfully than before. "Let me feel your pulse."

The Chevalier bowed and submitted, watching the countenance of the operator all the time with an anxiety that was not lost upon me.

"Do you sleep well?" asked my father, holding the fragile little wrist between his finger and thumb.

"Passably, Monsieur."

"Dream much?"

"Ye—es, I dream."

"Are you subject to giddiness?"

The Chevalier shrugged his shoulders and looked uneasy.

"*C'est vrai,*" he acknowledged, more unwillingly than ever, "*J'ai des vertiges.*"

My father relinquished his hold and scribbled a rapid prescription.

"There, sir," said he, "get that preparation made up, and when you next feel as you

felt just now, drink a wineglassful. I should recommend you to keep some always at hand, in case of emergency. You will find further directions on the other side."

The little Frenchman attempted to get up with his usual vivacity; but was obliged to balance himself against the back of a chair.

"Monsieur," said he, with another of his profound bows, "I thank you infinitely. You make me too much attention; but I am grateful. And, Monsieur, my little girl—my child that is far away across the sea—she thanks you also. *Elle m'aime Monsieur—elle m'aime, cette pauvre petite!* What shall she do if I die?"

Again he raised his hand to his brow. He was unconscious of anything theatrical in the gesture. He was in sad earnest, and his eyes were wet with tears which he made no effort to conceal.

My father shuffled restlessly in his chair.

"No obligation—no obligation at all," he muttered, with a touch of impatience in his voice. "And now, what about those tickets?"

I suppose, Basil, you're dying to see all this tomfoolery?"

"That I am, sir," said I, joyfully. "I should like it above all things!"

The Chevalier glided forward, and laid a couple of little pink cards upon my father's desk.

"If," said he, timidly, "if Monsieur will make me the honour to accept"

"Not for the world, sir—not for the world!" interposed my father. "The boy shan't go, unless I pay for the tickets."

"But, Monsieur"

"Nothing of the kind, sir. I cannot hear of it. What are the prices of the seats?"

Our little visitor looked down and was silent; but I replied for him.

"The reserved seats," I whispered, "are half-a-crown each."

"Then I will take eight reserved," said my father, opening a drawer in his desk and bringing out a bright new sovereign.

The little Frenchman started. He could hardly believe in such munificence.

"When? How much?" stammered

he, with a pleasant confusion of adverbs.

“Eight,” growled my father, scarcely able to repress a smile.

“Eight? *mon Dieu*, Monsieur, how you are generous! I shall keep for you all the first row.”

“Oblige me by doing nothing of the kind,” said my father, very decisively. “It would displease me extremely.”

The Chevalier counted out the eight little pink cards, and ranged them in a row beside my father’s desk.

“Count them, Monsieur, if you please,” said he, his eyes wandering involuntarily towards the sovereign.

My father did so with much gravity, and handed over the money.

The Chevalier consigned it, with trembling fingers, to a small canvas bag, which looked very empty, and which came from the deepest recesses of his pocket.

“Monsieur,” said he, “my thanks are in my heart. I will not fatigue you with them. Good morning.”

He bowed again, for perhaps the twentieth

time ; lingered a moment at the threshold ; and then retired, closing the door softly after him.

My father rubbed his head all over, and gave a great yawn of satisfaction.

“ I am so much obliged to you, sir,” I said eagerly.

“ What for ?”

“ For having bought those tickets. It was very kind of you.”

“ Hold your tongue. I hate to be thanked,” snarled he, and plunged back again into his books and papers.

Once more the studious silence in the room—once more the rustling leaf and scratching pen, which only made the stillness seem more still, within and without.

“ I beg your pardons,” murmured the voice of the little Chevalier.

I turned, and saw him peeping through the half-opened door. He looked more wistful than ever, and twisted the handle nervously between his fingers.

My father frowned, and muttered something between his teeth. I fear it was

not very complimentary to the Chevalier.

“One word, Monsieur,” pleaded the little man, edging himself round the door, “one small word !”

“Say it, sir, and have done with it,” said my father, savagely.

The Chevalier hesitated.

“I—I—Monsieur le Docteur—that is, I wish”

“Confound it, sir, what do you wish ?”

The Chevalier brushed away a tear.

“*Dites-moi*,” he said with suppressed agitation. “One word—yes or no—is he dangerous ?”

My father’s countenance softened.

“My good friend,” he said, gently, “we are none of us safe for even a day, or an hour ; but after all, that which we call danger is merely a relative position. I have known men in a state more precarious than yours who lived to a long old age, and I see no reason to doubt that with good living, good spirits, and precaution, you stand as fair a chance as another.”

The little Frenchman pressed his hands

together in token of gratitude, whispered a broken word or two of thanks, and bowed himself out of the room.

When he was fairly gone, my father flung a book at my head and said, with more brevity than politeness :—

“ Boy, bolt the door.”

CHAPTER III.

The Events of an Evening.

“**B**ASIL, my boy, if you are going to that place, you must take Collins with you.”

“Won’t you go yourself, father?”

“I! Is the boy mad?”

“I hope not, sir; only as you took eight reserved seats, I thought”

“You’ve no business to think, sir! Seven of those tickets are in the fire.”

“For fear, then, you should fancy to burn the eighth, I’ll wish you good evening!”

So away I darted, called to Collins to follow me, and set off at a brisk pace towards the Red Lion Hotel. Collins was our indoor servant; a sharp, merry fellow,

some ten years' older than myself, who desired no better employment than to escort me upon such an occasion as the present. The audience had begun to assemble when we arrived. Collins went into the shilling places, while I ensconced myself in the second row of reserved seats. I had an excellent view of the stage. There, in the middle of the platform, stood the conjuror's table—a quaint, cabalistic-looking piece of furniture with carved black legs and a deep bordering of green cloth all round the top. A gay pagoda-shaped canopy of many hues was erected overhead. A long white wand leaned up against the wall. To the right stood a bench laden with mysterious jars, glittering bowls, gilded cones, mystical globes, coloured glass boxes, and other properties. To the left stood a large arm-chair covered with crimson cloth. All this was very exciting, and I waited breathlessly till the Wizard should appear.

He came at last ; but not, surely, our dapper little visitor of yesterday ! A majestic beard of ashen grey fell in patriarchal locks

almost to his knees. Upon his head he wore a high cap of some dark fur; upon his feet embroidered slippers; and round his waist a glittering belt patterned with hieroglyphics. A long woollen robe of chocolate and orange fell about him in heavy folds, and swept behind him, like a train. I could scarcely believe, at first, that it was the same person; but, when he spoke, despite the pomp and obscurity of his language, I recognised the plaintive voice of the little Chevalier.

“*Messieurs et Mesdames*,” he began, and took up the wand to emphasise his discourse; “to read in the stars the events of the future—to transform into gold the metals inferior—to discover the composition of that Elixir who, by himself, would perpetuate life, was in past ages the aim and aspiration of the natural philosopher. But they are gone, those days—they are displaced, those sciences. The Alchemist and the Rosicrucian are no more, and of all their race, the professor of Legerdemain alone survives. Ladies and gentlemen, my magic he is simple. I retain

not familiars. I employ not crucible, nor furnace, nor retort. I but amuse you with my agility of hand, and for commencement I tell you that you shall be deceived as well as the Wizard of the Caucasus can deceive you."

His voice trembled, and the slender wand shivered in his hand. Was this nervousness? Or was he, in accordance with the quaintness of his costume and the amplitude of his beard, enacting the feebleness of age?

He advanced to the front of the platform. "Three things I require," he said. "A watch, a pocket-handkerchief, and a hat. Is there here among my visitors any person so gracious as to lend me these trifles? I will not injure them, ladies and gentlemen. I will only pound the watch in my mortar—burn the *mouchoir* in my lamp, and make a pudding in the *chapeau*. And, with all this, I engage to return them to their proprietors, better as new."

There was a pause, and a laugh. Presently a gentleman volunteered his hat, and a lady her embroidered handkerchief; but

no person seemed willing to submit his watch to the pounding process.

“Shall nobody lend me the watch?” asked the Chevalier; but in a voice so hoarse that I scarcely recognised it.

A sudden thought struck me, and I rose in my place.

“I shall be happy to do so,” I said aloud, and made my way round to the front of the platform.

At the moment when he took it from me, I spoke to him.

“Monsieur Proudhine,” I whispered, “you are ill! What can I do for you?”

“Nothing, *mon enfant*,” he answered, in the same low tone. “I suffer; *mais il faut se résigner*.”

“Break off the performance—retire for half an hour.”

“Impossible. See, they already observe us!”

And he drew back abruptly. There was a seat vacant in the front row. I took it, resolved at all events to watch him narrowly.

Not to detail too minutely the events of a

performance which since that time has become sufficiently familiar, I may say that he carried out his programme with dreadful exactness, and, after appearing to burn the handkerchief to ashes and mix up a quantity of eggs and flour in the hat, proceeded very coolly to smash the works of my watch beneath his ponderous pestle. Notwithstanding my faith, I began to feel seriously uncomfortable. It was a neat little silver watch of foreign workmanship—not very valuable, to be sure, but precious to me as the most precious of repeaters.

“He is very tough, your watch, Monsieur,” said the Wizard, pounding away vigorously. “He—he takes a long time . . . *Ah ! mon Dieu !*”

He raised his hand to his head, uttered a faint cry, and snatched at the back of the chair for support.

My first thought was that he had destroyed my watch by mistake—my second, that he was very ill indeed. Scarcely knowing what I did, and quite forgetting the audience, I jumped on the platform to his aid.

He shook his head, waved me away with one trembling hand, made a last effort to articulate, and fell heavily to the ground.

All was confusion in an instant. Everybody crowded to the stage; whilst I, with a presence of mind which afterwards surprised myself, made my way out by a side-door and ran to fetch my father. He was fortunately at home, and in less than ten minutes the Chevalier was under his care. We found him laid upon a sofa in one of the sitting-rooms of the inn, pale, rigid, insensible, and surrounded by an idle crowd of lookers-on. They had taken off his cap and beard, and the landlady was endeavouring to pour some brandy down his throat; but his teeth were fast set, and his lips were blue and cold.

“Oh, Doctor Arbuthnot! Doctor Arbuthnot!” cried a dozen voices at once, “the Conjuror is dying!”

“For which reason, I suppose, you are all trying to smother him!” said my father angrily. “Mistress Cobbe, I beg you will not trouble yourself to pour that brandy down

the man's throat. He has no more power to swallow it than my stick. Basil, open the window, and help me to loosen these things about his throat. Good people all, I must request you to leave the room. This man's life is in peril, and I can do nothing while you remain. Go home—go home. You will see no more conjuring to-night."

My father was peremptory, and the crowd unwillingly dispersed. One by one they left the room and gathered discontentedly in the passage. When it came to the last two or three, he took them by the shoulders, closed the door upon them, and turned the key.

Only the landlady, an elderly woman-servant, and myself remained.

The first thing my father did was to examine the pupil of the patient's eye, and lay his hand upon his heart. It still fluttered feebly, but the action of the lungs was suspended, and his hands and feet were cold as death.

My father shook his head.

"This man must be bled," said he; "but I have little hope of saving him."

He was bled, and, though still unconscious, became less rigid. They then poured a little wine down his throat, and he fell into a passive but painless condition, more inanimate than sleep, but less positive than a state of trance.

A fire was then lighted, a mattress brought down, and the patient laid upon it, wrapped in many blankets. My father announced his intention of sitting up with him all night. In vain I begged for leave to share his vigil. He would hear of no such thing, but turned me out as he had turned out the others, bade me a brief "Good night," and desired me to run home as quickly as I could.

At that stage of my history, to hear was to obey; so I took my way quietly through the bar of the hotel, and had just reached the door when a touch on my sleeve arrested me. It was Mr. Cobbe, the landlord—a portly, red-whiskered Boniface of the old English type.

"Good evening, Mr. Basil," said he.
"Going home, sir?"

“Yes, Mr. Cobbe,” I replied. “I can be of no further use here.”

“Well, sir, you’ve been of more use this evening than anybody—let alone the Doctor—that I must say for you,” observed Mr. Cobbe, approvingly. “I never see such presence o’ mind in so young a gen’leman before. Never, sir. Have a glass of grog and a cigar, sir, before you turn out.”

Much as I felt flattered by the supposition that I smoked (which was more than I could have done to save my life), I declined Mr. Cobbe’s obliging offer and wished him good night. But the landlord of the Red Lion was in a gossiping humour, and would not let me go.

“If you won’t take spirits, Mr. Basil,” said he, “you must have a glass of negus. I couldn’t let you go out without something warm—particular after the excitement you’ve gone through. Why, bless you, sir, when they ran out and told me, I shook like a leaf—and I don’t look like a very nervous subject, do I? And so sudden as it was, too, poor little gentleman!”

“Very sudden, indeed,” I replied, mechanically.

“Does Doctor Arbuthnot think he’ll get the better of it, Mr. Basil?”

“I fear he has little hope.”

Mr. Cobbe sighed, and shook his head, and smoked in silence.

“To be struck down just when he was playing such tricks as them conjuring dodges, do seem uncommon awful,” said he, after a time. “What was he after at the minute?—making a pudding, wasn’t he, in some gentleman’s hat?”

I uttered a sudden ejaculation, and set down my glass of negus untasted. Till that moment I had not once thought of my watch.

“Oh, Mr. Cobbe!” I cried, “he was pounding my watch in the mortar!”

“*Your* watch, Mr. Basil?”

“Yes, mine—and I have not seen it since. What can have become of it? What shall I do?”

“Do!” echoed the landlord, seizing a candle; “why, go and look for it, to be sure,

Mr. Basil. That's safe enough, you may be sure !”

I followed him to the room where the performance had taken place. It showed darkly and drearily by the light of one feeble candle. The benches and chairs were all in disorder. The wand lay where it had fallen from the hand of the wizard. The mortar still stood on the table, with the pestle beside it. It contained only some fragments of broken glass.

Mr. Cobbe laughed triumphantly.

“Come, sir,” said he, “the watch is safe enough, anyhow. Mounseer only made believe to pound it up, and now all that concerns us is to find it.”

That was indeed all—not only all, but too much. We searched everything. We looked in all the jars and under all the moveables. We took the cover off the chair; we cleared the table; but without success. My watch had totally disappeared, and we at length decided that it must be concealed about the conjuror's person. Mr. Cobbe was my consoling angel.

“Bless you, sir,” said he, “don’t never be cast down. My wife shall look for the watch to-morrow morning, and I’ll promise you we’ll find out every pocket he has about him.”

“And my father—you won’t tell my father!” I said dolefully.

Mr. Cobbe replied by a mute but expressive piece of pantomime, and took me back to the bar, where the good landlady ratified all that her husband had promised in her name.

The stars shone brightly as I went home, and there was no moon. The town was intensely silent, and the road intensely solitary. I met no one on my way; let myself quietly in; and stole up to my bedroom in the dark.

It was already late; but I was restless and weary—too restless to sleep, and too weary to read. I could not detach myself from the impressions of the day; and I longed for the morning, that I might learn the fate of my watch, and the condition of the Chevalier.

At length, after some hours of wakefulness, I dropped into a profound and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

The Chevalier makes his Last Exit.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players :
They have their exits and their entrances.

As You Like It.



WAS waked by my father's voice calling to me from the garden, and so started up with that strange and sudden sense of trouble which most of us have experienced at some time or other in our lives.

"Nine o'clock, Basil," cried my father.
"Nine o'clock,—come down directly, sir!"

I sprang out of bed, and for some seconds could remember nothing of what had happened; but when I looked out of the window and saw my father in his dressing-gown and slippers walking up and down

the sunny path with his hands behind his back and his eyes fixed on the ground, it all flashed suddenly upon me. To plunge into my bath, dress, run down, and join him in the garden, was the work of but a few minutes.

“Good morning, sir,” I said, breathlessly.

He stopped short in his walk, and looked at me from head to foot.

“Humph!” said he; “you have dressed quickly”

“Yes, sir; I was startled to find myself so late.”

“So quickly,” he continued, “that you have forgotten your watch.”

I felt my face burn. I had not a word to answer.

“I suppose,” said he, “you thought I should not find it out?”

“I had hoped to recover it first,” I replied falteringly; “but”

“But you may make up your mind to the loss of it, sir; and serve you rightly, too,” interposed my father. “I can tell you, for your satisfaction, that the man’s clothes have

been thoroughly examined, and that your watch has not been found. No doubt it lay somewhere on the table, and was stolen in the confusion."

I hung my head. I could have wept for vexation.

My father laughed sardonically.

"Well, Master Basil," he said, "the loss is yours, and yours only. You won't get another watch from me, I promise you."

I retorted angrily, whereat he only laughed the more; and then we went in to breakfast.

Our morning meal was more unsociable than usual. I was too much annoyed to speak, and my father too preoccupied. I longed to inquire after the Chevalier, but not choosing to break the silence, hurried through my breakfast that I might run round to the Red Lion immediately after. Before we had left the table, a messenger came to say that "the conjuror was taken worse," and so my father and I hastened away together.

He had passed from his trance-like sleep

into a state of delirium, and when we entered the room, was sitting up, pale and ghost-like, muttering to himself, and gesticulating as if in the presence of an audience.

“*Pas du tout*,” said he, fantastically, “*pas du tout, Messieurs*—here is no deception. You shall see him pass from my hand to the *coffre*, and yet you shall not find how he does travel.”

My father smiled bitterly.

“Conjuror to the last!” said he. “In the face of death, what a mockery is his trade!”

Wandering as were his wits, he caught the last word and turned fiercely round; but there was no recognition in his eye.

“Trade, Monsieur!” he echoed. “Trade!—you shall not call him trade! Do you know who I am, that you dare call him trade? *Dieu des Dieux! N’est ce pas que je suis noble, moi?* Trade!—when did one of my race embrace a trade? *Canaille!* I do condescend for my reasons to take your money, but you shall not call him a trade!”

Exhausted by this sudden burst of passion, he fell back upon his pillow, muttering and

flushed. I bent over him, and caught a scattered phrase from time to time. He was dreaming of wealth, fancying himself rich and powerful, poor wretch! and all unconscious of his condition.

“You shall see my Chateaux,” he said, “my horses—my carriages. Listen—it is the ringing of the bells. Aha! *le jour viendra—le jour viendra!* Conjuror! who speaks of a conjuror? I never was a conjuror! I deny it: and he lies who says it! *Attendez!* Is the curtain up? Ah! my table—where is my table? I cannot play till I have my table. *Scélerats! je suis volé! je l’ai perdu! je l’ai perdu!* Ah, what shall I do? What shall I do? They have taken my table—they have taken”

He burst into tears, moaned twice or thrice, closed his eyes, and fell into a troubled sleep.

The landlady sobbed. Hers was a kind heart, and the little Frenchman’s simple courtesy had won her good-will from the first.

“He had real quality manners,” she said, disconsolately. “I do believe, gentlemen,

that he had seen better days. Poor as he was, he never disputed the price of anything; and he never spoke to me without taking off his hat ”

“ Upon my soul, Mistress Cobbe,” said my father, “ I incline to your opinion. I do think he is not what he seems.”

“ And if I only knew where to find his friends, I shouldn’t care half so much !” exclaimed the landlady. “ It do seem so hard that he should die here, and not one of his own blood follow him to the grave ! Surely he has some one who loves him !”

“ There was something said the other day about a child,” mused my father. “ Have no papers or letters been found about his person ?”

“ None at all. Why, Doctor, you were here last night when we searched for Master Basil’s watch, and you are witness that he had nothing of the kind in his possession. As to his luggage, that’s only a carpet bag and his conjuring things, and we looked through them as carefully as possible.”

The Chevalier moaned again, and tossed

his arms feebly in his sleep. "The proofs," said he. "The proofs! I can do nothing without the proofs."

My father listened. The landlady shook her head.

"He has been going on like that ever since you left, sir," she said pitifully; "fancying he's been robbed, and calling out about the proofs—only ten times more violent. Then, again, he thinks he is going to act, and asks for his table. It's wonderful how he takes on about that trumpery table!"

Scarcely had she spoken the words when the Chevalier opened his eyes, and, by a supreme effort, sat upright in his bed. The cold dew rose upon his brow; his lips quivered; he strove to speak, and only an inarticulate cry found utterance. My father flew to his support.

"If you have anything to say," he urged earnestly, "try to say it now!"

The dying man trembled convulsively, and a terrible look of despair came into his wan face.

"Tell—tell" . . . he gasped; but his voice

failed him, and he could get no further.


My father laid him gently down. There came an interval of terrible suspense—a moment of sharp agony—a deep, deep sigh—and then silence.

My father laid his hand gently upon my shoulder.

“It is all over,” he said; “and his secret, if he had one, is in closer keeping than ours. Come away, boy; this is no place for you.”

CHAPTER V.

In Memoriam.

 HE poor little Chevalier ! He died and became famous.

Births, deaths, and marriages are the great events of a country town; the prime novelties of a country newspaper; the salt of conversation, and the soul of gossip. An individual who furnishes the community with one or other of these topics, is a benefactor to his species. To be born is much; to marry is more; to die is to confer a favour on all the old ladies of the neighbourhood. They love a christening, and caudle—they rejoice in a wedding, and cake—but they prefer a funeral and black kid gloves. It is a tragedy played off at the expense of the few for the gratification of the many—a

costly luxury, of which it is pleasanter to be the spectator than the entertainer.

Occurring, therefore, at a season when the supply of news was particularly scanty, the death of the little Chevalier was a boon to Saxonholme. The wildest reports were bandied about, and the most extraordinary fictions set on foot respecting his origin and station. He was a Russian spy. He was the unfortunate son of Louis XIV. and Marie-Antoinette. He was a pupil of Cagliostro, and the husband of Mdlle. Lenormand. Customers flocked to the tap of the Red Lion as they had never flocked before, unless in election-time ; and good Mrs. Cobbe had to repeat the story of the conjuror's illness and death till, like many other reciters, she had told it so often that she began to forget it. As for her husband, he had enough to do to serve the customers and take the money, to say nothing of showing the room, which proved a vast attraction, and remained for more than a week just as it was left on the evening of the performance, with the table, canopy, and

paraphernalia of wizardom still set out upon the platform.

In the midst of these things arose a momentous question—what was the religion of the deceased, and where should he be buried? As in the old miracle plays we find good and bad angels contending for the souls of the dead, so on this occasion did the heads of all the Saxonholme churches, chapels, and meeting-houses contend for the body of the little Chevalier. He was a Roman Catholic. He was a Dissenter. He was a member of the Established Church. He must be buried in the new Protestant Cemetery. He must lie in the churchyard of the Ebenezer Tabernacle. He must sleep in the far-away “God’s Acre” of Father Daly’s Chapel, and have a cross at his head, and masses said for the repose of his soul. The controversy ran high. The reverend gentlemen convoked a meeting, quarrelled outrageously, and separated in high dudgeon without having arrived at any conclusion.

Whereupon arose another question, melancholy, ludicrous, perplexing, and, withal, as

momentous as the first—Would the little Chevalier get buried at all? Or was he destined to remain, like Mahomet's coffin, for ever in a state of suspense?

At the last, when Mr. and Mrs. Cobbe despairingly believed that they were never to be relieved of their troublesome guest, a vestry was called, and the churchwardens brought the matter to a conclusion. When he went round with his tickets, the conjuror called first at the Rectory, and solicited the patronage of Doctor Brand. Would he have paid that compliment to the cloth had he been other than a member of that religion “by law established?” Certainly not. The point was clear—could not be clearer; so orthodoxy and the new Protestant Cemetery carried the day.

The funeral was a great event—not so far as mutes, feathers, and carriages were concerned, for the Chevalier left but little worldly gear, and without hard cash even the most deserving must forego “the trappings and the suits of woe;” but it was a great event, inasmuch as it celebrated the

victory of the Church, and the defeat of all schismatics. The rector himself, complacent and dignified, preached the funeral sermon to a crowded congregation, the following Sunday. We almost forgot, in fact, that the little Chevalier had any concern in the matter, and regarded it only as the triumph of orthodoxy.

All was not ended, even here. For some weeks our conjuror continued to be the hero of every pulpit round about. He was cited as a shining light, denounced as a vessel of wrath, praised, pitied, and calumniated according to the creed and temper of each declaimer. At length the controversy languished, died a natural death, and became "alms for oblivion."

Laid to rest under a young willow in a quiet corner, with a plain stone at his head, the little Frenchman was himself in course of time forgotten :—

"Alas ! Poor Yorick !"

CHAPTER VI.

Polonius to Laertes.

EARS went by. I studied ; outgrew my jackets ; became a young man. It was time, in short, that I walked the hospitals, and passed my examination.

I had spoken to my father more than once upon the subject—spoken earnestly and urgently, as one who felt the necessity and justice of his appeal. But he put me off from time to time ; persisted in looking upon me as a boy long after I had become acquainted with the penalties of the razor ; and counselled me to be patient, till patience was well-nigh exhausted. The result of this treatment was that I became miserable and discontented ; spent whole days wandering

about the woods; and degenerated into a creature half idler and half misanthrope. I had never loved the profession of medicine. I should never have chosen it had I been free to follow my own inclinations: but having diligently fitted myself to enter it with credit, I felt that my father wronged me in this delay; and I felt it perhaps all the more bitterly because my labour had been none of love. Happily for me, however, he saw his error before it was too late, and repaired it generously.

“Basil,” said he, beckoning me one morning into the consulting-room, “I want to speak to you.”

I obeyed sullenly, and stood leaning up against the window, with my hands in my pockets.

“You’ve been worrying me, Basil, more than enough these last few months,” he said, rummaging among his papers, and speaking in a low, constrained voice. “I don’t choose to be worried any longer. It is time you walked the hospitals, and—you may go.”

“To London, sir?”

“No. I don’t intend you to go to London.”

“To Edinburgh, then, I suppose,” said I, in a tone of disappointment.

“Nor to Edinburgh. You shall go to Paris.”

“To Paris !”

“Yes—the French surgeons are the most skilful in the world, and Chéron will do everything for you. I know no eminent man in London from whom I should choose to ask a favour ; and Chéron is one of my oldest friends—nay, the oldest friend I have in the world. If you have but two ounces of brains, he will make a clever man of you. Under him you will study French practice ; walk the hospitals of Paris ; acquire the language and, I hope, some of the polish of the French people. Are you satisfied ?”

“More than satisfied, sir,” I replied, eagerly.

“You shall not want for money, boy ; and you may start as soon as you please. Is the thing settled ?”

“Quite, as far as I am concerned.”

My father rubbed his head all over with both hands, took off his spectacles, and walked up and down the room. By these signs he expressed any unusual degree of satisfaction. All at once he stopped, looked me full in the face, and said :—

“Understand me, Basil. I require one thing in return.”

“If that thing be industry, sir, I think I may promise that you shall not have cause to complain.”

My father shook his head.

“Not industry,” he said ; “not industry alone. Keep good company, my boy. Keep good hours. Never forget that a gentleman must look like a gentleman, dress like a gentleman, frequent the society of gentlemen. To be a mere bookworm is to be a drone in the great hive. I hate a drone—as I hate a sloven.”

“I understand you, father,” I faltered, blushing. “I know that of late I—I have not——”

My father laid his hand suddenly over my mouth.

“No confessions—no apologies,” he said hastily. “We have both been to blame in more respects than one, and we shall both know how to be wiser in the future. Now go, and consider all that you may require for your journey.”

Agitated, delighted, full of hope, I ran up to my own room, locked the door, and indulged in a delightful reverie. What a prospect had suddenly opened before me! What novelty! what adventure! To have visited London would have been to fulfil all my desires; but to be sent to Paris was to receive a passport for Fairyland!

That day, for the first time in many months, I dressed myself carefully, and went down to dinner with a light heart, a cheerful face, and an unexceptionable neckcloth.

As I took my place at the table, my father looked up cheerily and gave me a pleased nod of recognition.

Our meal passed off very silently. It was my father's maxim that no man could do more than one thing well at a time—especially at table; so we had contracted a habit

which to strangers would have seemed even more unsociable than it really was, and gave to all our meals an air more penitential than convivial. But this day was, in reality, a festive occasion, and my father was disposed to be more than unusually agreeable. When the cloth was removed, he flung the cellar key at my head, and exclaimed in a burst of unexampled good-humour:—

“Basil, you dog, fetch up a bottle of the particular port!”

Now it is one of my theories that a man's after-dinner talk takes much of its weight, colour, and variety from the quality of his wines. A generous vintage brings out generous sentiments. Good fellowship, hospitality, liberal politics, and the milk of human kindness, may be uncorked simultaneously with a bottle of old Madeira; while a pint of thin Sauterne is productive only of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. We grow sententious on Burgundy—logical on Bordeaux—sentimental on Cyprus—maudlin on Lagrima Christo—and witty on Champagne.

Port was my father's favourite wine. It

warmed his heart, cooled his temper, and made him not only conversational, but expansive. Leaning back complacently in his easy-chair, with the glass upheld between his eye and the window, he discoursed to me of my journey, of my prospects in life, and of all that I should do and avoid, professionally and morally.

“Work,” he said, “is the panacea for every sorrow—the plaister for every pain—your only universal remedy. Industry, air, and exercise are our best physicians. Trust to them, boy ; but beware how you publish the prescription, lest you find your occupation gone. Remember, if you wish to be rich, you must never seem to be poor ; and as soon as you stand in need of your friends, you will find yourself with none left. Be discreet of speech, and cultivate the art of silence. Above all things, be truthful. Hold your tongue as long as you please, but never open your lips to a lie. Show no man the contents of your purse—he would either despise you for having so little, or try to relieve you of the burden of carrying so much.


Above all, never get into debt, and never fall in love. The first is disgrace, and the last is the devil! Respect yourself, if you wish others to respect you; and bear in mind that the world takes you at your own estimate. To dress well is a duty one owes to society. The man who neglects his own appearance not only degrades himself to the level of his inferiors, but puts an affront upon his friends and acquaintances."

"I trust, sir," I said in some confusion, "that I shall never incur the last reproach again."

"I hope not, Basil," replied my father, with a smile. "I hope not. Keep your conscience clean and your boots blacked, and I have no fear of you. You are no hero, my boy, but it depends upon yourself whether you become a man of honour or a scamp; a gentleman or a clown. You have, I see, registered a good resolution to-day. Keep it; and remember that Pandemonium will get paved without your help. There would be no industry, boy, if there was no idleness, and all true progress begins with—Reform."

CHAPTER VII.

At the Cheval Blanc.

Y journey, even at this distance of time, appears to me like an enchanted dream. I observed, yet scarcely remembered, the scenes through which I passed, so divided was I between the novelty of travelling and the eagerness of anticipation. Provided with my letters of introduction, the sum of one hundred guineas English, and the enthusiasm of twenty years of age, I fancied myself endowed with an immortality of wealth and happiness.

The Brighton coach passed through our town once a week; so I started for Paris without having ever visited London, and took the route by Newhaven and Dieppe. Having left home on Tuesday morning, I

reached Rouen in the course of the next day but one. At Rouen I stayed to dine and sleep, and so made my way to the *Cheval Blanc*, a grand hotel on the quay, where I was received by an aristocratic elderly waiter who sauntered out from a side office, surveyed me patronisingly, entered my name upon a card for a seat at the *table d'hôte*, and, having rung a feeble little bell, sank exhausted upon a seat in the hall.

“To number seventeen, Marie,” said this majestic personage, handing me over to a pretty little chamber-maid who attended the summons. “And, Marie, on thy return, my child, bring me an absinthe.”

We left this gentleman in a condition of ostentatious languor, and Marie deposited me in a pretty room overlooking an exquisite little garden set round with beds of verbena and scarlet geranium, with a fountain sparkling in the midst. This garden was planted in what had once been the courtyard of the building. The trees nodded and whispered, and the windows at the opposite side of the quadrangle glittered like

burnished gold in the sunlight. I threw open the jalousies, plucked one of the white roses that clustered outside, and drank in with delight the sunny perfumed air that played among the leaves, and scattered the waters of the fountain. I could not long rest thus, however. I longed to be out and about; so, as it was now no more than half-past three o'clock, and two good hours of the glorious midsummer afternoon yet remained to me before the hotel dinner-hour, I took my hat, and went out along the quays and streets of this beautiful and ancient Norman city.

Under crumbling archways; through narrow alleys where the upper storeys nearly met overhead, leaving only a bright strip of dazzling sky between; past quaint old mansions, and sculptured fountains, and stately churches hidden away in all kinds of strange forgotten nooks and corners, I wandered, wondering and unwearied. I saw the statue of Jeanne d'Arc; the château of Diane de Poitiers; the archway carved in oak where the founder of the city still, in rude effigy,

presides ; the museum rich in mediæval relics ; the market-place crowded with fruit-sellers and flower-girls in their high Norman caps. Above all, I saw the rare old Gothic Cathedral, with its wondrous wealth of antique sculpture ; its iron spire, destined, despite its traceried beauty, to everlasting incompleteness ; its grass-grown buttresses, and crumbling pinnacles, and portals crowded with images of saints and kings. I went in. All was grey, shadowy, vast ; dusk with the rich gloom of painted windows ; and so silent that I scarcely dared disturb the echoes by my footsteps. There stood in a corner near the door, a triangular iron stand stuck full of votive tapers that flickered and sputtered and guttered dimly, shedding showers of penitential grease-drops on the paved floor below ; and there was a very old peasant woman on her knees before the altar. I sat down on a stone bench and fell into a long study of the stained oriel, the light o'erarching roof, and the long perspective of the pillared aisles. Presently the verger came out of the vestry-room, followed by two

gentlemen. He was short and plump, with a loose black gown, slender black legs, and a pointed nose—like a larger species of raven.

“*Bon jour, M’sieur,*” croaked he, laying his head a little on one side, and surveying me with one glittering eye. “Will M’sieur be pleased to see the treasury?”

“The treasury!” I repeated. “What is there to be seen in the treasury?”

“Nothing, sir, worth one sou of an Englishman’s money,” said the taller of the gentlemen. “Tinsel, paste, and dusty bones—all humbug and extortion.”

Something in the scornful accent and the deep voice aroused the suspicions of the verger, though the words were spoken in English.

“Our treasury, M’sieur,” croaked he, more ravenly than ever, “is rich—rich in episcopal jewels; in relics—inestimable relics. Tickets two francs each.”

Grateful, however, for the timely caution, I acknowledged my countryman’s courtesy by a bow, declined the proffered invest-

ment, and went out again into the sunny streets.

At five o'clock I found myself installed near the head of an immensely long dinner-table in the *salle à manger* of the Cheval Blanc. The *salle à manger* was a magnificent temple radiant with mirrors, and lustres, and panels painted in fresco. The dinner was an imposing rite, served with solemn ceremonies by ministering waiters. There were about thirty guests seated round, in august silence, most of them very smartly dressed, and nearly all English. A stout gentleman, with a little knob on the top of his bald head, a buff waistcoat, and a shirt amply frilled, sat opposite to me, flanked on either side by an elderly daughter in green silk. On my left I was supported by a thin young gentleman with fair hair, and blue glasses. To my right stood a vacant chair, the occupant of which had not yet arrived; and at the head of the table sat a spare pale man dressed all in black, who spoke to no one, kept his eyes fixed upon his plate, and was served by the waiters with especial servility. The soup

came and went in profound silence. Faint whispers passed to and fro with the fish. It was not till the roast made its appearance that anything like conversation broke the sacred silence of the meal. At this point the owner of the vacant chair arrived, and took his place beside me. I recognised him immediately. It was the Englishman whom I had met in the Cathedral. We bowed, and presently he spoke to me. In the meantime, he had every foregone item of the dinner served to him as exactly as if he had not been late at table, and sipped his soup with perfect deliberation while others were busy with the sweets. Our conversation began, of course, with the weather and the place.

“Your first visit to Rouen, I suppose?” said he. “Beautiful old city, is it not? *Garçon*, a pint of Bordeaux—Leoville.”

I modestly admitted that it was not only my first visit to Rouen, but my first to the Continent.

“Ah, you may go farther than Rouen, and fare worse,” said he. “Do you sketch? No? That’s a pity, for it’s deliciously pic-

turesque—though, for my own part, I am not enthusiastic about gutters and gables, and I object to a population composed exclusively of old women. I'm glad, by the way, that I preserved you from wasting your time among the atrocious lumber of that so-called treasury."

"The treasury!" exclaimed my slim neighbour with the blue glasses. "Beg your p—p—pardon, sir, but are you speaking of the Cathedral treasury? Is it worth v—v—visiting?"

"Singularly so," replied he to my right. "One of the rarest collections of authentic curiosities in France. They have the snuff-box of Clovis, the great toe of Saint Helena, and the tongs with which St. Dunstan took the devil by the nose."

"Up—p—pon my word, now, that's curious," ejaculated the thin tourist, who had an impediment in his speech. "I must p—p put that down. Dear me! the snuff-box of King Clovis! I must see these relics to-morrow."

"Be sure you ask for the great toe of St.

Helena," said my right hand companion, proceedingly imperturbably with his dinner. "The saint had but one leg at the period of her martyrdom, and that great toe is unique."

"G—g—good gracious!" exclaimed the tourist, pulling out a gigantic note-book, and entering the fact upon the spot. "A saint with one leg—and a lady, too! Wouldn't m—m—miss that for the world!"

I looked round, puzzled by the gravity of my new acquaintance.

"Is this all true?" I whispered. "You told me the treasury was a humbug."

"And so it is."

"But the snuff-box of Clovis, and"

"Pure inventions! The man's a muff, and on muffs I have no mercy. Do you stay long in Rouen?"

"No, I go on to Paris to-morrow. I wish I could remain longer."

"I am not sure that you would gain more from a long visit than from a short one. Some places are like some women, charming, *en passant*, but intolerable upon close

acquaintance. It is just so with Rouen. The place contains no fine galleries, and no places of public entertainment; and though exquisitely picturesque, is nothing more. One cannot always be looking at old houses, and admiring old churches. You will be delighted with Paris."

"B—b—beautiful city," interposed the stammerer, eager to join our conversation, whenever he could catch a word of it. "I'm going to P—P—Paris myself."

"Then, sir, I don't doubt you will do ample justice to its attractions," observed my right hand neighbour. "From the size of your note-book, and the industry with which you accumulate useful information, I should presume that you are a conscientious observer of all that is recondite and curious."

"I asp—p—pire to be so," replied the other, with a blush and a bow. "I m—m—mean to exhaust P—P—Paris. I'm going to write a b—b—book about it, when I get home."

My friend to the right flashed one glance of silent scorn upon the future author,

drained the last glass of his Bordeaux Leoville, pushed his chair impatiently back, and said :—"This place smells like a kitchen. Will you come out, and have a cigar?"

So we rose, took our hats, and in a few moments were strolling under the lindens on the Quai de Corneille.

I, of course, had never smoked in my life; and, humiliating though it was, found myself obliged to decline a "prime Havanah," proffered in the daintiest of embroidered cigar cases. My companion looked as if he pitied me. "You'll soon learn," said he. "A man can't live in Paris without tobacco. Do you stay there many weeks?"

"Two years, at least," I replied, registering an inward resolution to conquer the difficulties of tobacco without delay. "I am going to study medicine under an eminent French surgeon."

"Indeed! Well, you could not go to a better school, or embrace a nobler profession. I used to think a soldier's life the grandest under heaven; but curing is a finer thing than killing, after all! What a de-

licious evening, is it not? If one were only in Paris, now, or Vienna,”

“What, Oscar Dalrymple!” exclaimed a voice close beside us. “I should as soon have expected to meet the great Panjandrum himself!”

“—With the little round button at top,” added my companion, tossing away the end of his cigar, and shaking hands heartily with the new-comer. “By Jove, Frank, I’m glad to see you! What brings you here?”

“Business—confound it! And not pleasant business either. A *procès* which my father has instituted against a great manufacturing firm here at Rouen, and of which I have to bear the brunt. And you?”

“And I, my dear fellow? Pshaw! what should I be but an idler in search of amusement?”

“Is it true that you have sold out of the Enniskillens?”

“Unquestionably. Liberty is sweet; and who cares to carry a sword in time of peace? Not I, at all events.”

While this brief greeting was going for-

ward, I hung somewhat in the rear, and amused myself by comparing the speakers. The new-comer was rather below than above the middle-height, fair-haired and boyish, with a smile full of mirth and an eye full of mischief. He looked about two years my senior. The other was much older—two or three and thirty, at the least—dark, tall, powerful, finely built; his wavy hair clipped close about his sun-burnt neck; a thick moustache of unusual length; and a chest that looked as if it would have withstood the shock of a battering-ram. Without being at all handsome, there was a look of brightness, and boldness, and gallantry about him that arrested one's attention at first sight. I think I should have taken him for a soldier, had I not already gathered it from the last words of their conversation.

“Who is your friend?” I heard the new-comer whisper.

To which the other replied:—“Haven't the ghost of an idea.”

Presently he took out his pocket-book, and, handing me a card, said:—

“ We are under the mutual disadvantage of all chance acquaintances. My name is Dalrymple—Oscar Dalrymple, late of the Enniskillen Dragoons. My friend here is unknown to fame as Mr. Frank Sullivan ; a young gentleman who has the good-fortune to be younger partner in a firm of merchant princes, and the bad taste to dislike his occupation.”

How I blushed as I took Captain Dalrymple's card, and stammered out my own name in return ! I had never possessed a card in my life, nor needed one, till this moment. I rather think that Captain Dalrymple guessed these facts, for he shook hands with me at once, and put an end to my embarrassment by proposing that we should take a boat, and pull a mile or two up the river. The thing was no sooner said than done. There were plenty of boats below the iron bridge ; so we chose one of the cleanest, and jumped into it without any kind of reference to the owner, whoever he might be.

“ *Batelier, Messieurs ? Batelier ?* ” cried a


dozen men at once, rushing down to the water's edge.

But Dalrymple had already thrown off his coat, and seized the oars.

“*Batelier*, indeed !” laughed he, as with two or three powerful strokes he carried us right into the middle of the stream. “Trust an Oxford man for employing any arms but his own, when a pair of sculls are in question !”

CHAPTER VIII.

The Island in the River.

T was just eight o'clock when we started, with the twilight coming on. Our course lay up the river, with a strong current setting against us ; so we made but little way, and enjoyed the tranquil beauty of the evening. The sky was pale and clear, somewhat greenish overhead and deepening along the line of the horizon into amber and rose. Behind us lay the town with every brown spire articulated against the sky, and every vane glittering in the last glow that streamed up from the west. To our left rose a line of steep chalk cliffs, and before us lay the river, winding away through meadow lands fringed with

willows and poplars, and interspersed with green islands wooded to the water's edge. Presently the last flush faded, and one large planet, splendid and solitary, like the first poet of a dark century, emerged from the deepening grey.

My companions were in high spirits. They jested; they laughed; they hummed scraps of songs; they had a greeting for every boat that passed. By-and-by, we came to an island with a little landing-place where a score or two of boats were moored against the alders by the water's-edge. A tall flag-staff gay with streamers peeped above the tree-tops, and a cheerful sound of piping and fiddling, mingled with the hum of many voices, came and went with the passing breeze. As Dalrymple rested on his oars to listen, a boat which we had outstripped some minutes before, shot past us to the landing-place, and its occupants, five in number, alighted.

"Bet you ten to one that's a bridal party," said Mr. Sullivan.

"Say you so? Then suppose we follow,

and have a look at the bride!" exclaimed his friend. "The place is a public garden."

The proposition was carried unanimously, and we landed, having first tied the boat to a willow. We found the island laid out very prettily; intersected by numbers of little paths, with rustic seats here and there among the trees, and variegated lamps gleaming out amid the grass, like parti-coloured glow-worms. Following one of these paths, we came presently to an open space, brilliantly lighted and crowded by holiday-makers. Here were refreshment stalls, and Russian swings, and queer-looking merry-go-rounds, where each individual sat on a wooden horse and went gravely round and round with a stick in his hand, trying to knock off a ring from the top of a pole in the middle. Here, also, was a band in a gaily decorated orchestra; a circular area roped off for dancers; a mysterious tent with a fortune-teller inside; a lottery-stall resplendant with vases and nick-knacks, which nobody was ever known to win; in

short, all kinds of attractions, stale enough, no doubt, to my companions, but sufficiently novel and amusing to me.

We strolled about for some time among the stalls and promenaders, and amused ourselves by criticising the company, which was composed almost entirely of peasants, soldiers, artisans in blue blouses, and humble tradespeople. The younger women were mostly handsome, with high Norman caps, white kerchiefs, and massive gold ear-rings. Many, in addition to the ear-rings, wore a gold cross suspended round the neck by a piece of black velvet; and some had a brooch to match. Here, sitting round a table under a tree, we came upon a family group, consisting of a little plump, bald-headed *bourgeois* with his wife and two children—the wife stout and rosy; the children noisy and authoritative. They were discussing a dish of poached eggs and a bottle of red wine, to the music of a polka close by.

“I should like to dance,” said the little girl, drumming with her feet against the leg

of the table, and eating an egg with her fingers. "I may dance presently with Philippe, may I not, papa?"

"I won't dance," said Philippe sulkily. "I want some oysters."

"Oysters, *mon enfant*! I have told you twice already that no one eats oysters in July," observed his mother.

"I don't care for that," said Philippe. "It's my *fête* day, and Uncle Jacques said I was to have whatever I fancied;—I want some oysters."

"Your Uncle Jacques did not know what an unreasonable boy you are," replied the father angrily. "If you say another word about oysters, you shall not ride in the *manège* to-night."

Philippe thrust his fists into his eyes and began to roar—so we walked away.

In an arbour, a little further on, we saw two young people whispering earnestly, and conscious of no eyes but each other's.

"A pair of lovers," said Sullivan.

"And a pair that seldom get the chance of meeting, if we may judge by their un-

tasted omelette," replied Dalrymple. "But where's the bridal party?"

"Oh, we shall find them presently. You seem interested."

"I am. I mean to dance with the bride, and make the bridegroom jealous."

We laughed and passed on, peeping into every arbour, observing every group, and turning to stare at every pretty girl we met. My own aptitude in the acquisition of these arts of gallantry astonished myself. Now, we passed a couple of soldiers playing at dominoes; now a noisy party round a table in the open air covered with bottles; now an arbour where half a dozen young men and three or four girls were assembled round a bowl of blazing punch. The girls were protesting they dared not drink it, but were drinking it, nevertheless, with exceeding gusto.

"Grisettes and *commis voyageurs*!" said Dalrymple, contemptuously. "Let us go and look at the dancers."

We went on, and stood in the shelter of some trees near the orchestra. The players

consisted of three violins, a clarionette, and a big drum. The big drum was an enthusiastic performer. He belaboured his instrument as heartily as if it had been his worst enemy, but with so much independence of character that he never kept the same time as his fellow-players for two minutes together. They were playing a polka for the benefit of some twelve or fifteen couples, who were dancing with all their might in the space before the orchestra. On they came, round and round and never weary, two at a time—a mechanic and a grisette, a rustic and a Normandy girl, a tall soldier and a short widow, a fat tradesman and his wife, a couple of milliners' assistants who preferred dancing together to not dancing at all, and so forth.

“How I wish somebody would ask me, *ma mère!*” said a coquettish brunette, close by, with a sidelong glance at ourselves.

“You shall dance with your brother Paul, my dear, as soon as he comes,” replied her mother, a stout *bourgeoise* with a green fan.

“But it is such dull work to dance with

one's brother!" pouted the brunette. "If it were one's cousin, even, it would be different."

Mr. Frank Sullivan flung away his cigar, and began buttoning up his gloves.

"I'll take that damsel out immediately," said he. "A girl who objects to dance with her brother deserves encouragement."

So away he went with his hat inclining jauntily on one side, and, having obtained the mother's permission, whirled away with the pretty brunette into the very thickest of the throng.

"There they are!" said Dalrymple, suddenly. "There's the wedding party. *Per Bacco!* but our little bride is charming!"

"And the bridegroom is a handsome specimen of rusticity."

"Yes—a genuine pastoral pair, like a Dresden china shepherd and shepherdess. See, the girl is looking up in his face—he shakes his head. She is urging him to dance, and he refuses! Never mind, *ma belle*—you shall have your valse, and Corydon may be as cross as he pleases!"

“Don’t flatter yourself that she will displease Corydon to dance with your lordship!” I said, laughingly.

“Pshaw! she would displease fifty Corydons, if I chose to make her do so,” said Dalrymple, with a smile of conscious power.

“True; but not on her wedding day.”

“Wedding day or not, I beg to observe that in less than half an hour you will see me whirling along with my arm round little Phillis’s dainty waist. Now come, and see how I do it.”

He made his way through the crowd, and I, half curious, half abashed, went with him. The party was five in number, consisting of the bride and bridegroom; a rosy, middle-aged peasant woman, evidently the mother of the bride; and an elderly couple who looked like humble townsfolk, and were probably related to one or other of the newly-married pair. Dalrymple opened the attack by stumbling against the mother, and then overwhelming her with elaborate apologies.

“In these crowded places, Madame,” said

he, in his fluent French, "one is scarcely responsible for an impoliteness. I beg ten thousand pardons, however. I hope I have not hurt you?"

"*Ma foi!* no, M'sieur. It would take more than that to hurt me!"

"Nor injured your dress, I trust, Madame!"

"Ah, *par exemple!* do I wear muslins or gauzes that they should not bear touching? No, no, no, M'sieur—thanking you all the same."

"You are very amiable, Madame, to say so."

"You are very polite, M'sieur, to think so much of a trifle."

"Nothing is a trifle, Madame, where a lady is concerned. At least, so we Englishmen consider."

"Bah! M'sieur is not English?"

"Indeed, Madame, I am."

"*Mais, mon Dieu! c'est incroyable.* Suzette—brother Jacques—André, do you hear this? M'sieur, here, swears that he is English, and yet he speaks French like one of our-

selves! Ah, what a fine thing learning is!"

"I may say with truth, Madame, that I never appreciate the advantages of education so highly, as when they enable me to converse with ladies who are not my own countrywomen," said Dalrymple, carrying on the conversation with as much studied politeness as if his interlocutor had been a duchess.

"But—excuse the observation—you are here, I imagine, upon a happy occasion?"

The mother laughed, and rubbed her hands.

"*Dâme!* one may see that," replied she, "with one's eyes shut! Yes, M'sieur,—yes—their wedding day, the dear children—their wedding day! They've been betrothed these two years."

"The bride is very like you, Madame," said Dalrymple, gravely. "Your younger sister, I presume?"

"*Ah, quel farceur!* He takes my daughter for my sister! Suzette, do you hear this? M'sieur is killing me with laughter!"

And the good lady chuckled, and gasped, and wiped her eyes, and dealt Dalrymple a

playful push between the shoulders, which would have upset the balance of any less heavy dragoon.

“Your daughter, Madame!” said he. “Allow me to congratulate you. May I also be permitted to congratulate the bride?” And with this he took off his hat to Suzette and shook hands with André, who looked not overpleased, and proceeded to introduce me as his friend Monsieur Basil Arbuthnot, “a young English gentleman, *très distingué*.”

The old lady then said her name was Madame Roquet, and that she rented a small farm about a mile and a half from Rouen; that Suzette was her only child; and that she had lost her “blessed man” about eight years ago. She next introduced the elderly couple as her brother Jacques Robineau and his wife, and informed us that Jacques was a tailor, and had a shop opposite the church of St. Maclou, “*là bas*.”

To judge of Monsieur Robineau’s skill by his outward appearance, I should have said that he was professionally unsuccessful, and supplied his own wardrobe from the misfits

returned by his customers. He wore a waistcoat which was considerably too long for him, trousers which were considerably too short, and a green cloth coat with a high velvet collar which came up nearly to the tops of his ears. In respect of personal characteristics, Monsieur Robineau and his wife were the most admirable contrast imaginable. Monsieur Robineau was short; Madame Robineau was tall. Monsieur Robineau was as plump and rosy as a robin; Madame Robineau was pale and bony to behold. Monsieur Robineau looked the soul of good nature, ready to chirrup over his *grog-au-vin*, to smoke a pipe with his neighbour, to cut a harmless joke or enjoy a harmless frolic, as cheerfully as any little tailor that ever lived; Madame Robineau, on the contrary, preserved a dreadful dignity, and looked as if she could laugh at nothing on this side of the grave. Not to consider the question too curiously, I should have said, at first sight, that Monsieur Robineau stood in no little awe of his wife, and that Madame Robineau was the very head

and front of their domestic establishment.

It was wonderful and delightful to see how Captain Dalrymple placed himself on the best of terms with all these good people—how he patted Robineau on the back and complimented Madame, banished the cloud from André's brow, and summoned a smile to the pretty cheek of Suzette. One would have thought he had known them for years already, so thoroughly was he at home with every member of the wedding party.

Presently, he asked Suzette to dance. She blushed scarlet, and cast a pretty appealing look at her husband and her mother. I could almost guess what she whispered to the former by the motion of her lips.

"Monsieur André will, I am sure, spare Madame for one galop," said Dalrymple, with that kind of courtesy which accepts no denial. It was quite another tone, quite another manner. It was no longer the persuasive suavity of one who is desirous only to please, but the politeness of a gentleman to an inferior.

The cloud came back upon André's brow,

and he hesitated; but Madame Roquet interposed.

“Spare her!” she exclaimed. “*Dâme!* I should think so! She has never left his arm all day. Here, my child, give me your shawl while you dance, and take care not to get too warm, for the evening air is dangerous.”

And so Suzette took off her shawl, and André was silenced, and Dalrymple, in less than the half hour, was actually whirling away with his arm round little Phillis’s dainty waist.

I am afraid that I proved a very indifferent *locum tenens* for my brilliant friend, and that the good people thought me exceedingly stupid. I tried to talk to them, but the language tripped me up at every turn, and the right words never would come when they were wanted. Besides, I felt uneasy without knowing exactly why. I could not keep from watching Dalrymple and Suzette. I could not help noticing how closely he held her; how he never ceased talking to her; and how the smiles and blushes chased

each other over her pretty face. That I should have had wit enough to observe these things proved that my education was progressing rapidly; but then, to be sure, I was studying under an accomplished teacher.

They danced for a long time. So long, that André became uneasy, and my available French was quite exhausted. I was heartily glad when Dalrymple brought back the little bride at last, flushed and panting, and (himself as cool as a diplomatist) assisted her with her shawl and resigned her to the protection of her husband.

“Why hast thou danced so long with that big Englishman?” murmured André, discontentedly. “When *I* asked thee, thou wast too tired, and now”

“And now I am so happy to be near thee again,” whispered Suzette.

André softened directly.

“But to dance for twenty minutes” began he.

“Ah, but he danced so well, and I am so fond of waltzing, André!”

The cloud gathered again, and an impatient

reply was coming, when Dalrymple opportunely invited the whole party to a bowl of punch in an adjoining arbour, and himself led the way with Madame Roquet. The arbour was vacant, a waiter was placing the chairs, and the punch was blazing in the bowl. It had evidently been ordered during one of the pauses in the dance, that it might be ready to the moment—a little attention which called forth exclamations of pleasure from both Madame Roquet and Monsieur Robineau, and touched with something like a gleam of satisfaction even the grim visage of Monsieur Robineau's wife.

Dalrymple took the head of the table, and stirred the punch into leaping tongues of blue flame till it looked like a miniature Vesuvius.

“What diabolical-looking stuff!” I exclaimed. “You might, to all appearance, be Lucifer's own cupbearer.”

“A proof that it ought to be devilish good,” replied Dalrymple, ladling it out into the glasses. “Allow me, ladies and gentlemen, to propose the health, happiness, and prosperity of the bride and bridegroom.

May they never die, and may they be remembered for ever after!"

We all laughed as if this was the best joke we had heard in our lives, and Dalrymple filled the glasses up again.

"What, in the name of all that's mischievous, can have become of Sullivan?" said he to me. "I have not caught so much as a glimpse of him for the last hour."

"When I last saw him, he was dancing."

"Yes, with a pretty little dark-eyed girl in a blue dress. By Jove! that fellow will be getting into trouble if left to himself!"

"But the girl has her mother with her!"

"All the stronger probability of a scrimmage," replied Dalrymple, sipping his punch with a covert glance of salutation at Suzette.

"Shall I see if they are among the dancers?"

"Do—but make haste; for the punch is disappearing fast."

I left them, and went back to the platform where the indefatigable public was now engaged in the performance of quadrilles. Never, surely, were people so in-

dustrious in the pursuit of pleasure! They poussetted, bowed, curtsied, joined hands, and threaded the mysteries of every figure, as if their very lives depended on their agility.

“Look at Jean Thomas,” said a young girl to her still younger companion. “He dances like an angel!”

The one thus called upon to admire, looked at Jean Thomas, and sighed.

“He never asks me, by any chance,” said she, sadly, “although his mother and mine are good neighbours. I suppose I don’t dance well enough—or dress well enough,” she added, glancing at her friend’s gay shawl and coquettish cap.

“He has danced with me twice this evening,” said the first speaker triumphantly; “and he danced with me twice last Sunday at the Jardin d’Armide. Elise says”

Her voice dropped to a whisper, and I heard no more. It was a passing glimpse behind the curtain—a peep at one of the many dramas of real life that are being played for ever around us. Here were all the elements of romance—love, admiration, vanity, envy.

Here was a hero in humble life—a lady-killer in his own little sphere. He dances with one, neglects another, and multiplies his conquests with all the heartlessness of a gentleman.

I wandered round the platform once or twice, scrutinising the dancers, but without success. There was no sign of Sullivan, or of his partner, or of his partner's mother, the *bourgeoise* with the green fan. I then went to the grotto of the fortune-teller, but it was full of noisy rustics; and thence to the lottery hall, where there were plenty of players, but not those of whom I was in search.

“Wheel of fortune, Messieurs et Mesdames,” said the young lady behind the counter. “Only fifty centimes each. All prizes, and no blanks—try your fortune, *monsieur le capitaine*! Put in once, *monsieur le capitaine*; once for yourself, and once for madame. Only fifty centimes each, and the certainty of winning!”

Monsieur le capitaine was a great, raw-boned corporal, with a pretty little maid-servant on his arm. The flattery was not

very delicate ; but it succeeded. He threw down a franc. The wheel flew round, the papers were drawn, and the corporal won a needle-case, and the maid-servant a cigar-holder. In the midst of the laugh to which this distribution gave rise, I walked away in the direction of the refreshment stalls. Here were parties supping substantially, dancers drinking orgeat and lemonade, and little knots of tradesmen and mechanics sipping beer ridiculously out of wine-glasses to an accompaniment of cakes and sweet-biscuits. Still I could see no trace of Mr. Frank Sullivan.

At length I gave up the search in despair, and on my way back encountered Master Philippe leaning against a tree, and looking exceedingly helpless and unwell.

"You ate too many eggs, Philippe," said his mother. "I told you so at the time."

"It—it wasn't the eggs," faltered the wretched Philippe. "It was the Russian swing."

"And serve you rightly, too," said his father angrily. "I wish with all my heart

that you had had your favourite oysters as well!"

When I came back to the arbour, I found the little party immensely happy, and a fresh bowl of punch just placed upon the table. André was sitting next to Suzette, as proud as a king. Madame Roquet, volubly convivial, was talking to every one. Madame Robineau was silently disposing of all the biscuits and punch that came in her way. Monsieur Robineau, with his hat a little pushed back and his thumb in the arm-hole of his waistcoat, was telling a long story to which nobody listened: while Dalrymple, sitting on the other side of the bride, was gallantly doing the duties of entertainer.

He looked up—I shook my head, slipped back into my place, and listened to the tangled threads of conversation going on around me.

"And so," said Monsieur Robineau, proceeding with his story, and staring down into the bottom of his empty glass, "and so I said to myself, 'Robineau, *mon ami*, take care. One honest man is better than two

rogues; and if thou keepest thine eyes open, the devil himself stands small chance of cheating thee!’ So I buttoned up my coat—this very coat I have on now, only that I have re-lined and re-cuffed it since then, and changed the buttons for brass ones; and brass buttons for one’s holiday coat, you know, look so much more *comme il faut*—and I said to the landlord”

“Another glass of punch, Monsieur Robineau,” interrupted Dalrymple.

“Thank you, M’sieur, you are very good; well, as I was saying”

“Ah, bah, brother Jacques!” exclaimed Madame Roquet impatiently, “don’t give us that old story of the miller and the grey colt this evening! We’ve all heard it a hundred times already. Sing us a song instead, *mon ami*!”

“I shall be happy to sing, sister Marie,” replied Monsieur Robineau, with somewhat husky dignity, “when I have finished my story. You may have heard the story before. So may André—so may Suzette—so may my wife. I admit it. But these

gentlemen — these gentlemen who have never heard it, and who have done me the honour”

“Not to listen to a word of it,” said Madame Robineau, sharply. “There, you are answered, husband. Drink your punch, and hold your tongue.”

Monsieur Robineau waved his hand majestically, and assumed a Parliamentary air.

“Madame Robineau,” he said, getting more and more husky, “be so obliging as to wait till I ask for your advice. With regard to drinking my punch, I have drunk it—” and here he again stared down into the bottom of his glass, which was again empty—“and with regard to holding my tongue, that is my business, and—and”

“Monseur Robineau,” said Dalrymple, “allow me to offer you some more punch.”

“Not another drop, Jacques,” said Madame sternly. “You have had too much already.”

Poor Monsieur Robineau, who had put out his glass to be re-filled, paused and looked helplessly at his wife.

“*Ma chère ange*, . . .” he began ; but she shook her head inflexibly, and Monsieur Robineau submitted with the air of a man who knows that from the sentence of the supreme court there is no appeal.

“*Dâme !*” whispered Madame Roquet, with a confidential attack upon my ribs that gave me a pain in my side for half an hour after, “my brother has the heart of a rabbit. He gives way to her in everything—so much the worse for him. My blessed man, who was a saint of a husband, would have broken the bowl over my ears if I had dared to interfere between his glass and his mouth !”

Whereupon Madame Roquet filled her own glass and mine, and Madame Robineau, less indulgent to her husband than herself, followed our example.

Just at this moment, a confused hubbub of voices, and other sounds expressive of a *fracas*, broke out in the direction of the trees behind the orchestra. The dancers deserted their polka, the musicians stopped fiddling, the noisy supper-party in the next arbour abandoned their cold chicken and

salad, and everybody ran to the scene of action. Dalrymple was on his feet in a moment; but Suzette held André back with both hands and implored him to stay.

“Some *mauvais sujets*, no doubt, who refuse to pay the score,” suggested Madame Roquet.

“Or Sullivan, who has got into one of his infernal scrapes,” muttered Dalrymple with a determined wrench at his moustache. “Come on, anyhow, and let us see what is the matter!”

So we snatched up our hats and ran out, just as Monsieur Robineau seized the opportunity to drink another tumbler of punch when his wife was not looking.

Following in the direction of the rest, we took one of the paths behind the orchestra, and came upon a noisy crowd gathered round a wooden summer-house.

“It’s a fight,” said one.

“It’s a pickpocket,” said another.

“Bah! it’s only a young fellow who has been making love to a girl,” exclaimed a third.

We forced our way through, and there we saw Mr. Frank Sullivan with his hat off, his arms crossed, and his back against the wall, presenting a dauntless front to the gesticulations and threats of an exceedingly enraged young man with red hair, who was abusing him furiously. The amount of temper displayed by this young man was something unparalleled. He was angry in every one of his limbs. He stamped, he shook his fists, he shook his head. The very tips of his ears looked scarlet with rage. Every now and then he faced round to the spectators, and appealed to them—or to a stout woman with a green fan, who was almost as red and angry as himself, and who always rushed forward when addressed, and shook the green fan in Sullivan's face.

“You are an aristocrat!” stormed the young man. “A pampered, insolent aristocrat! A dog of an Englishman! A *scélérat*! Don't suppose you are to trample upon us for nothing! We are Frenchmen, you beggarly islander—Frenchmen, do you hear?”

A growl of sympathetic indignation ran

through the crowd, and “*à bas les aristocrats*—*à bas les Anglais!*” broke out here and there.

“In the devil’s name, Sullivan,” said Dalrymple shouldering his way up to the object of these agreeable menaces, “what have you been after, to bring this storm about your ears?”

“Pshaw! nothing at all,” replied he with a mocking laugh, and a contemptuous gesture. “I danced with a pretty girl, and treated her to champagne afterwards. Her mother and brother hunted us out, and spoiled our flirtation. That’s the whole story.”

Something in the laugh and gesture—something, too, perhaps in the language which they could not understand, appeared to give the last aggravation to both of Sullivan’s assailants. I saw the young man raise his arm to strike—I saw Dalrymple fell him with a blow that would have stunned an ox—I saw the crowd close in, heard the storm break out on every side, and, above it all, the deep, strong tones of Dalrymple’s voice, saying:—

“To the boat, boys! Follow me.”

In another moment he had flung himself into the crowd, dealt one or two sounding blows to left and right, cleared a passage for himself and us, and sped away down one of the narrow walks leading to the river. Presently, having taken one or two turnings, none of which seemed to lead to the spot we sought, we came upon an open space full of piled-up benches, pyramids of empty bottles, boxes, baskets, and all kinds of lumber. Here we paused to listen and take breath.

We had left the crowd behind us, but they were still within hearing.

“By Jove!” said Dalrymple, “I don’t know which way to go. I believe we are on the wrong side of the island.”

“And I believe they are after us,” added Sullivan, peering into the baskets. “By all that’s fortunate, here are the fireworks! Has anybody got a match? We’ll take these with us, and go off in a blaze of triumph!”

The suggestion was no sooner made than

adopted. We filled our hats and pockets with crackers and Catherine-wheels, piled the rest into one great heap, threw a dozen or so of lighted fusees into the midst of them, and just as the voices of our pursuers were growing momentarily louder and nearer, darted away again down a fresh turning, and saw the river gleaming at the end of it.

“Hurrah! here’s a boat,” shouted Sullivan, leaping into it, and we after him.

It was not our boat, but we did not care for that. Ours was at the other side of the island, far enough away, down by the landing-place. Just as Dalrymple seized the oars, there burst forth a tremendous explosion. A column of rockets shot up into the air, and instantly the place was as light as day. Then a yell of discovery broke forth, and we were seen almost as soon as we were fairly out of reach. We had secured the only boat on that side of the island, and three or four of Dalrymple’s powerful strokes had already carried us well into the middle of the stream. To let off our own store

of fireworks—to pitch tokens of our regard to our friends on the island in the shape of blazing crackers, which fell sputtering and fizzing into the water half way between the boat and the shore—to stand up in the stern and bow politely—finally, to row away singing “God Save the Queen” with all our might, were feats upon which we prided ourselves very considerably at the time, and the recollection of which afforded us infinite amusement all the way home.

That evening we all supped together at the Cheval Blanc, and of what we did or said after supper I have but a confused remembrance. I believe that I tried to smoke a cigar; and it is my impression that I made a speech, in which I swore eternal friendship to both of my new friends; but the only circumstance about which I cannot be mistaken is that I awoke next morning with the worst specimen of headache that had yet come within the limits of my experience.

CHAPTER IX.

Damon and Pythias.

LEFT Rouen the day after my great adventure on the river, and Captain Dalrymple went with me to the station.

“You have my Paris address upon my card,” he said, as we walked to and fro upon the platform. “It’s just a bachelor’s den, you know—and I shall be there in about a fortnight or three weeks. Come and look me up.”

To which I replied that I was glad to be allowed to do so, and that I should “look him up” as soon as he came home. And so, with words of cordial good-will and a hearty shake of the hand, we parted.

Having started late in the evening, I ar-

rived in Paris between four and five o'clock on a bright midsummer Sunday morning. I was not long delayed by the Customs officers, for I carried but a scant supply of luggage. Having left this at an hotel, I wandered about till it should be time for breakfast. After breakfast, I meant to dress and call upon Dr. Chéron.

The morning air was clear and cool. The sun shone brilliantly, and was reflected back with dazzling vividness from long vistas of high white houses, innumerable windows, and gilded balconies. Theatres, shops, cafés, and hotels not yet opened, lined the great thoroughfares. Triumphal arches, columns, parks, palaces, and churches succeeded one another in apparently endless succession. I passed a lofty pillar crowned with a conqueror's statue—a palace tragic in history—a modern Parthenon surrounded by columns, peopled with sculptured friezes, and approached by a flight of steps extending the whole width of the building. I went in ; for the doors had just been opened, and a white-haired Sacristan was preparing the

seats for matin service. There were acolytes decorating the altar with fresh flowers, and early devotees on their knees before the shrine of the Madonna. The gilded ornaments, the tapers winking in the morning light, the statues, the paintings, the faint clinging odours of incense, the hushed atmosphere, the devotional silence, the marble angels kneeling round the altar, all united to increase my dream of delight. I gazed and gazed again; wandered round and round; and at last, worn out with excitement and fatigue, sank into a chair in a distant corner of the Church, and fell into a heavy sleep. How long it lasted I know not; but the voices of the choristers and the deep tones of the organ mingled with my dreams. When I awoke the last worshippers were departing, the music had died into silence, the wax-lights were being extinguished, and the service was ended.

Again I went out into the streets; but all was changed. Where there had been the silence of early morning there was now the confusion of a great city. Where there had

been closed shutters and deserted thoroughfares, there was the bustle of life, gaiety, business, and pleasure. The shops blazed with jewels and merchandise; the stonemasons were at work on the new buildings; the lemonade venders, with their gay reservoirs upon their backs, were plying a noisy trade; the bill-stickers were papering hoardings and lamp posts with variegated advertisements; the charlatan, in his gaudy chariot, was selling pencils and penknives to the accompaniment of a hand-organ; soldiers were marching to the clangour of military music; the merchant was in his counting-house, the stock-broker at the Bourse, and the loungeur, whose name is Legion, was sitting in the open air outside his favourite café, drinking chocolate, and yawning over the *Charivari*.

I thought I must be dreaming. I scarcely believed the evidence of my eyes. Was this Sunday? Was it possible that in our own little church at home,—in our own little church, where we could hear the birds twittering outside in every interval of the

quiet service—the old familiar faces, row beyond row, were even now upturned in reverent attention to the words of the preacher? Prince Bedreddin, transported in his sleep to the gates of Damascus, could scarcely have opened his eyes upon a foreign city and a strange people with more incredulous amazement.

I can now scarcely remember how that day of wonders went by. I only know that I rambled about as in a dream, and am vaguely conscious of having wandered through the gardens of the Tuileries; of having found the Louvre open, and of losing myself among some of the upper galleries; of lying exhausted upon a bench in the ChampsÉlysées; of returning by quays lined with palaces and spanned by noble bridges; of pacing round and round the enchanted arcades of the Palais Royal; of wondering how and where I should find my hotel, and of deciding at last that I could go no farther without dining somehow. Wearied and half stupefied, I ventured, at length, into one of the large

restaurants upon the Boulevards. Here I found spacious rooms lighted by superb chandeliers which were again reflected in mirrors that extended from floor to ceiling. Rows of small tables ran round the rooms, and a double line down the centre, each laid with its snowy cloth and glittering silver.

It was early when I arrived ; so I passed up to the top of the room, and appropriated a small table commanding a view of the great thoroughfare below. The waiters were slow to serve me ; the place filled speedily ; and by the time I had finished my soup, nearly all the tables were occupied. Here sat a party of officers, bronzed and mustachioed ; yonder a group of laughing girls ; a pair of provincials ; a family party, children, governess and all ; a stout capitalist, solitary and self-content ; a quatuor of rollicking *commis-voyageurs* ; an English couple, perplexed and curious. Amused by the sight of so many faces, listening to the hum of voices, and watching the flying waiters bearing all kinds of mysterious dishes, I

loitered over my lonely meal, and wished that this delightful whirl of novelty might last for ever. By and by a gentleman entered, walked up the whole length of the room in search of a seat, found my table occupied by only a single person, bowed politely, and drew his chair opposite mine.

He was a portly man of about forty-five or fifty years of age, with a broad, calm brow; curling light hair, somewhat worn upon the temples; and large blue eyes, more keen than tender. His dress was scrupulously simple, and his hands were immaculately white. He carried an umbrella little thicker than a walking-stick, and wrote out his list of dishes with a massive gold pencil. The waiters bowed down before him, as if he were an habitu   of the place.

It was not long before we fell into conversation. I do not remember which spoke first; but we talked of Paris—or rather, I talked, and he listened; for, what with the excitement and fatigue of the day, and what with the half bottle of champagne which I had magnificently ordered, I found myself

gifted with a sudden flood of words, and ran on, I fear, not very discreetly.

A few civil rejoinders, a smile, a bow, an assent, a question implied rather than spoken, sufficed to draw from me the particulars of my journey. I told everything, from my birth-place and education to my future plans and prospects; and the stranger, with a frosty humour twinkling about his eyes, listened politely. He was himself particularly silent; but he had the art of provoking conversation while quietly enjoying his own dinner. When this was finished, however, he leaned back in his chair, sipped his claret, and talked a little more freely.

“And so,” said he, in very excellent English, “you have come to Paris to finish your studies. But have you no fear, young gentleman, that the attractions of so gay a city may divert your mind from graver subjects? Do you think that, when every pleasure may be had for the seeking, you will be content to devote yourself to the dry details of an uninteresting profession?”

“It is not an uninteresting profession,” I

replied. "I might perhaps have preferred the church, or the law ; but having embarked in the study of medicine, I shall do my best to succeed in it."

The stranger smiled.

"I am glad," he said, "to see you so ambitious. I do not doubt that you will become a shining light in the brotherhood of Esculapius."

"I hope so," I replied, boldly. "I have studied closer than most men of my age, already."

He smiled again, coughed doubtfully, and insisted on filling my glass from his own bottle.

"I only fear," he said, "that you will be too diffident of your own merits. Now, when you call upon this Doctor . . . what did you say was his name?"

"Chéron," I replied, huskily.

"True, Chéron. Well, when you meet him for the first time you will, perhaps, be timid, hesitating, and silent. But, believe me, a young man of your remarkable abilities should be self-possessed. You ought to

inspire him from the beginning with a suitable respect for your talents."

"That's precisely the line I mean to take," said I, boastfully. "I'll—I'll astonish him. I'm afraid of nobody—not I!"

The stranger filled my glass again. His claret must have been very strong, or my head very weak, for it seemed to me, as he did so, that all the chandeliers were in motion.

"Upon my word," observed he, "you are a young man of infinite spirit."

"And you," I replied, making an effort to bring the glass steadily to my lips, "you are a capital fellow—a clear-sighted, sensible, capital fellow. We'll be friends."

He bowed, and said, somewhat coldly,

"I have no doubt that we shall become better acquainted."

"Better acquainted, indeed!—we'll be intimate!" I ejaculated, affectionately. "I'll introduce you to Dalrymple—you'll like him excessively. Just the fellow to delight you."

"So I should say," observed the stranger, drily.

“And as for you and myself, we’ll—we’ll be Damon and . . . what’s the other one’s name?”

“Pythias,” replied my new acquaintance, leaning back in his chair, and surveying me with a peculiar and very deliberate stare. “Exactly so—Damon and Pythias! A charming arrangement.”

“Bravo! Famous! And now we’ll have another bottle of wine.”

“Not on my account, I beg,” said the gentleman firmly. “My head is not so cool as yours.”

Cool, indeed, and the room whirling round and round, like a teetotum!

“Oh, if you won’t, I won’t,” said I confusedly; “but I—I could—drink my share of another bottle, I assure you, and not—feel the slightest . . .”

“I have no doubt on that point,” said my neighbour, gravely; “but our French wines are deceptive, Mr. Arbuthnot, and you might possibly suffer some inconvenience to-morrow. You, as a medical man, should understand the evils of dyspepsia.”

“Dy—dy—dyspepsia be hanged,” I muttered, dreamily. “Tell me, friend—by the by, I forget your name. Friend what?”

“Friend Pythias,” returned the stranger, drily. “You gave me the name yourself.”

“Ay, but your real name?”

He shrugged his shoulders.

“One name is as good as another,” said he, lightly. “Let it be Pythias, for the present. But you were about to ask me some question?”

“About old Chéron,” I said, leaning both elbows on the table, and speaking very confidentially. “Now tell me, have you—have you any notion of what he is like? Do you—know—know anything about him?”

“I have heard of him,” he replied, intent for the moment on the pattern of his wine-glass.

“Clever?”

“That is a point upon which I could not venture an opinion. You must ask some more competent judge.”

“Come, now,” said I, shaking my head and trying to look knowing; “you—you know

what I mean, well enough. Is he a grim old fellow? A—a—griffin, you know! Come, is he a gr—r—r—riffin?"

My words had by this time acquired a distressing, self-propelling tendency, and linked themselves into compounds of twenty and thirty syllables.

My *vis-à-vis* smiled, bit his lip, then laughed a dry, short laugh.

"Really," he said, "I am not in a position to reply to your question; but upon the whole, I should say that Dr. Chéron was not quite a griffin. The species, you see, is extinct."

I roared with laughter; vowed I had never heard a better joke in my life; and repeated his last words over and over, like a degraded idiot as I was. All at once, a sense of deadly faintness came upon me. I turned hot and cold by turns, and lifting my hand to my head, said, or tried to say:—

"Room's—'bominably—close!"

"We had better go," he replied promptly. "The air will do you good. Leave me to

settle for our dinners, and you shall make it right with me by and by."

He did so, and we left the room. Once out in the open air, I found myself unable to stand. He called a *fiacre*; almost lifted me in; took his place beside me; and asked the name of my hotel.

I had forgotten it; but I knew that it was opposite the railway station, and that was enough. When we arrived, I was on the verge of insensibility. I remember that I was led up-stairs by two waiters, and that the stranger saw me to my room. Then all was darkness and stupor.

.

CHAPTER X.

The Next Morning.

“Oh, my Christian ducats!”—*Merchant of Venice.*



ONE!—gone!—both gone!—my new gold watch, and my purse full of notes and Napoleons!

I rang the bell furiously. It was answered by a demure-looking waiter, with a face like a parroquet.

“Does Monsieur please to require anything?”

“Require anything!” I exclaimed, in the best French I could muster. “I have been robbed!”

“Robbed, Monsieur?”

“Yes, of my watch and purse!”

“*Tiens!* Of a watch and purse?” repeated the parroquet, lifting his eyebrows

with an air of well-bred surprise. "*C'est drôle.*"

"Droll!" I cried, furiously. "Droll, you scoundrel! I'll let you know whether I think it droll! I'll complain to the authorities! I'll have the house searched! I'll—I'll"

I rang the bell again. Two or three more waiters came, and the master of the hotel. They all treated my communication in the same manner—coolly; incredulously; but with unruffled politeness.

"Monsieur forgets," urged the master, "that he came back to the hotel last night in a state of absolute intoxication. Monsieur was accompanied by a stranger, who was gentlemanly, it is true; but since Monsieur acknowledges that that stranger was personally unknown to him, Monsieur may well perceive it would be more reasonable if his suspicions first pointed in that direction."

Struck by the force of this observation, I flung myself into a chair and remained silent.

"Has Monsieur no acquaintances in Paris

to whom he may apply for advice?" enquired the landlord.

"None," said I, moodily; "except that I have a letter of introduction to one Dr. Chéron."

The landlord and his waiters exchanged glances.

"I would respectfully recommend Monsieur to present his letter immediately," said the former. "Monsieur le Docteur Chéron is a man of the world—a man of high reputation and sagacity. Monsieur could not do better than advise with him."

"Call a cab for me," said I, after a long pause. "I will go."

The determination cost me something. Dismayed by the extent of my loss, racked with headache, languid, pale, and full of remorse for last night's folly, it needed but this humiliation to complete my misery. What! appear before my instructor for the first time with such a tale! I could have bitten my lips through with vexation.

The cab was called. I saw, but would not see, the winks and nods exchanged be-

hind my back by the grinning waiters. I flung myself into the vehicle, and soon was once more rattling through the noisy streets. But those brilliant streets had now lost all their charm for me. I admired nothing, saw nothing, heard nothing, on the way. I could think only of my father's anger and the contempt of Dr. Chéron.

Presently the cab stopped before a large wooden gate with two enormous knockers. One half of this gate was opened by a servant in a sad-coloured livery. I was shown across a broad courtyard, up a flight of lofty steps, and into a spacious *salon* plainly furnished.

"Monsieur le Docteur is at present engaged," said the servant, with an air of profound respect. "Will Monsieur have the goodness to be seated for a few moments."

I sat down. I rose up. I examined the books upon the table, and the pictures on the walls. I wished myself "anywhere, anywhere out of the world," and more than once was on the point of stealing out of the house, jumping into my cab, and making off

without seeing the doctor at all. One consideration alone prevented me. I had lost all my money, and had not even a franc left to pay the driver. Presently the door again opened, the grave footman reappeared, and I heard the dreaded announcement:—"Monsieur le Docteur will be happy to receive Monsieur in his consulting room."

I followed mechanically. We passed through a passage thickly carpeted, and paused before a green baize door. This door opened noiselessly, and I found myself in the great man's presence.

"It gives me pleasure to welcome the son of my old friend John Arbuthnot," said a clear, and not unfamiliar voice.

I started, looked up, grew red and white, hot and cold, and had not a syllable to utter in reply.

In Doctor Chéron, I recognised——

PYTHIAS!

CHAPTER XI.

Mysterious Proceedings.

THE doctor pointed to a chair, looked at his watch, and said :—

“I hope you have had a pleasant journey. Arrived this morning?”

There was not the faintest gleam of recognition on his face. Not a smile ; not a glance ; nothing but the easy politeness of a stranger to a stranger.

“N—not exactly,” I faltered. “Yesterday morning, sir.”

“Ah, indeed ! Spent the day sight-seeing, I dare say. Admire Paris?”

Too much astonished to speak, I took refuge in a bow.

“Not found any lodgings yet, I presume?”

asked the doctor, mending a pen very deliberately.

“N—not yet, sir.”

“I concluded so. The English do not seek apartments on Sunday. You observe the day very strictly, no doubt?”

Blushing and confused, I stammered some incoherent words and sat twirling my hat, the very picture of remorse.

“At what hotel have you put up?” he next enquired, without appearing to observe my agitation.

“The—the Hôtel des Messageries.”

“Good, but expensive. You must find a lodging to-day.”

I bowed again.

“And, as your father’s representative, I must take care that you procure something suitable, and are not imposed upon. My valet shall go with you.”

He rang the bell, and the sad-coloured footman appeared on the threshold.

“Desire Brunet to be in readiness to walk out with this gentleman,” he said briefly, and the servant retired.

“Brunet,” he continued, addressing me again, “is faithful and sagacious. He will instruct you on certain points indispensable to a resident in Paris, and will see that you are not ill-accommodated or overcharged. A young man has few wants, and I should infer that a couple of rooms in some quiet street will be all that you require?”

“I—I am very grateful.”

He waved down my thanks with an air of cold but polite authority; took out his note-book and pencil; (I could have sworn to that massive gold pencil!) and proceeded to question me.

“Your age, I think,” said he, “is twenty-one?”

“Twenty, sir.”

“Ah—twenty. You desire to be entered upon the list of visiting students at the Hôtel Dieu, to be free of the library and lecture-rooms, and to be admitted into my public classes?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Also, to attend here in my house for private instruction.”

“Yes, sir.”

He filled in a few words upon a printed form, and handed it to me with his visiting card.

“You will present these, and your passport, to the secretary at the hospital,” said he, “and will receive in return the requisite tickets of admission. Your fees have already been paid in, and your name has been entered. You must see to this matter at once, for the *bureau* closes at two o’clock: You will then require the rest of the day for lodging-seeking, moving, and so forth. To-morrow morning, at nine o’clock, I shall expect you here.”

“Indeed, sir,” I murmured, “I am more obliged than ”

“Not in the least,” he interrupted decisively; “your father’s son has every claim upon me. I object to thanks. All that I require from you are habits of industry, punctuality, and respect. Your father speaks well of you, and I have no doubt I shall find you all that he represents. Can I do anything more for you this morning?”

I hesitated ; could not bring myself to utter one word of that which I had come to say ; and murmured—

“ Nothing more, I thank you, sir.”

He looked at me piercingly, paused an instant, and then rang the bell.

“ I am about to order my carriage,” he said ; “ and, as I am going in that direction, I will take you as far as the Hôtel Dieu.”

“ But—but I have a cab at the door,” I faltered, remembering, with a sinking heart, that I had not a sou to pay the driver.

The servant appeared again.

“ Let the carriage be brought round immediately, and dismiss this gentleman’s cab.”

The man retired, and I heaved a sigh of relief. The doctor bent low over the papers on his desk, and I fancied for the moment that a faint smile flitted over his face. Then he took up his hat, and pointed to the door.

“ Now, my young friend,” he said authoritatively, “ we must be gone. Time is gold. After you.”

I bowed and preceded him. His very

courtesy was sterner than the displeasure of another, and I already felt towards him a greater degree of awe than I should have quite cared to confess. The carriage was waiting in the courtyard. I placed myself with my back to the horses; Dr. Chéron flung himself upon the opposite seat; a servant out of livery sprang up beside the coachman; the great gates were flung open; and we glided away on the easiest of springs and the softest of cushions.

Dr. Chéron took a newspaper from his pocket, and began to read; so leaving me to my own uncomfortable reflections.

And, indeed, when I came to consider my position I was almost in despair. Moneyless, what was to become of me? Watchless and moneyless, with a bill awaiting me at my hotel, and not a stiver in my pocket wherewith to pay it . . . Miserable pupil of a stern master! luckless son of a savage father! to whom could I turn for help? Not certainly to Dr. Chéron, whom I had been ready to accuse, half an hour ago, of having stolen my watch and purse.

Petty larceny and Dr. Chéron ! how ludicrously incongruous ! And yet, where was my property ? Was the Hôtel des Messageries a den of thieves ? And again, how was it that this same Dr. Chéron looked, and spoke, and acted, as if he had never seen me in his life till this morning ? Was I mad, or dreaming, or both ?

The carriage stopped and the door opened.

“Hôtel Dieu, M’sieur,” said the servant, touching his hat.

Dr. Chéron just raised his eyes from the paper.

“This is your first destination,” he said. “I would advise you, on leaving here, to return to your hotel. There may be letters awaiting you. Good morning.”

With this he resumed his paper, the carriage rolled away, and I found myself at the Hôtel Dieu, with the servant out of livery standing respectfully behind me.

Go back to my hotel ! Why should I go back ? Letters there could be none, unless at the Poste Restante. I thought this

a very unnecessary piece of advice, rejected it in my own mind, and so went into the hospital *bureau*, and transacted my business. When I came out again, Brunet took the lead.

He was an elderly man with a solemn countenance and a mysterious voice. His manner was oppressively respectful; his address diplomatic; his step stealthy as a courtier's. When we came to a crossing he bowed, stood aside, and followed me; then took the lead again; and so on, during a brisk walk of about half an hour. All at once, I found myself at the Hôtel des Messageries.

"Monsieur's hotel," said the doctor's valet, touching his hat.

"You are mistaken," said I, rather impatiently. "I did not ask to be brought here. My object this morning is to look for apartments."

"Post in at mid-day, Monsieur," he observed, gravely. "Monsieur's letters may have arrived."

"I expect none, thank you."

"Monsieur will, nevertheless, permit me

to enquire," said the persevering valet, and glided in before my eyes.

The thing was absurd! Both master and servant insisted that I must have letters, whether I would, or no! To my amazement, however, Brunet came back with a small sealed box in his hands.

"No letters have arrived for Monsieur," he said; "but this box was left with the porter about an hour ago."

I weighed it, shook it, examined the seals, and, going into the public room, desired Brunet to follow me. There I opened it. It contained a folded paper, a quantity of wadding, my purse, my roll of bank-notes, and my watch! On the paper, I read the following words:—

"Learn from the events of last night the value of temperance, the wisdom of silence, and the danger of chance acquaintanceships. Accept the lesson, and he by whom it is administered will forget the error."

The paper dropped from my hands and fell upon the floor. The impenetrable Brunet picked it up, and returned it to me.

“Brunet!” I ejaculated.

“Monsieur?” said he, interrogatively, raising his hand to his forehead by force of habit, although his hat stood beside him on the floor.

There was not a shadow of meaning in his face—not a quiver to denote that he knew anything of what had passed. To judge by the stolid indifference of his manner, one might have supposed that the delivery of caskets full of watches and valuables was an event of daily occurrence in the house of Dr. Chéron. His coolness silenced me. I drew a long breath; hastened to put my watch in my pocket, and lock up my money in my room; and then went to the master of the hotel, and informed him of the recovery of my property. He smiled and congratulated me; but he did not seem to be in the least surprised. I fancied, somehow, that matters were not quite so mysterious to him as they had been to me.

I also fancied that I heard a suspicious roar of laughter as I passed out into the street.

It was not long before I found such apartments as I required. Piloted by Brunet through some broad thoroughfares and along part of the Boulevards, I came upon a cluster of narrow streets branching off through a massive stone gateway from the Rue du Faubourg Montmartre. This little nook was called the Cité Bergère. The houses were white and lofty. Some had courtyards, and all were decorated with pretty iron balconies and delicately tinted Venetian shutters. Most of them bore the announcement —“*Apartements à louer*”—suspended above the door. Outside one of these houses sat two men with a little table between them. They were playing at dominoes, and wore the common blue blouse of the mechanic class. A woman stood by paring celery, with an infant playing on the mat inside the door and a cat purring at her feet. It was a pleasant group. The men looked honest, the woman good-tempered, and the house exquisitely clean; so the diplomatic Brunet went forward to negotiate, while I walked up and down outside. There were rooms to be let

on the second, third, and fifth floors. The fifth was too high, and the second too expensive; but the third seemed likely to suit me. The *suite* consisted of a bed-room, dressing-room, and tiny *salon*, and was furnished with the elegant uncomfortableness characteristic of our French neighbours. Here were floors shiny and carpetless; windows that objected to open, and drawers that refused to shut; mirrors all round the walls; a set of hanging shelves; an ormolu time-piece that struck all kinds of miscellaneous hours at unexpected times; an abundance of vases filled with faded artificial flowers; insecure chairs of white and gold; and a round table that had a way of turning over suddenly like a table in a pantomime, if you ventured to place anything on any part but the inlaid star in the centre. Above all, there was a balcony big enough for a couple of chairs and some flower-pots, overlooking the street.

I was delighted with everything. In imagination I beheld my balcony already blooming with roses, and my shelves laden

with books. I admired the white and gold chairs with all my heart, and saw myself reflected in half a dozen mirrors at once with an innocent pride of ownership which can only be appreciated by those who have tasted the supreme luxury of going into chambers for the first time.


“Shall I conclude for Monsieur at twenty francs a week?” murmured the sagacious Brunet.

“Of course,” said I, laying the first week’s rent upon the table.

And so the thing was done, and, brimful of satisfaction, I went off to the hotel for my luggage, and moved in immediately.

CHAPTER XII.

Broadcloth and Civilization.

LLOWING for my inexperience in the use of the language, I prospered better than I had expected, and found, to my satisfaction, that I was by no means behind my French fellow-students in medical knowledge. I passed through my preliminary examination with credit, and although Dr. Chéron was careful not to praise me too soon, I had reason to believe that he was satisfied with my progress. My life, indeed, was now wholly given up to my work. My country breeding had made me timid, and the necessity for speaking a foreign tongue served only to increase my natural reserve ; so that although I lived and studied day after day in the society of some two or three

hundred young men, I yet lived as solitary a life as Robinson Crusoe in his island. No one sought to know me. No one took a liking for me. Gay, noisy, chattering fellows that they were, they passed me by for a "dull and muddy-pated rogue;" voted me uncompanionable when I was only shy; and, doubtless, quoted me to each other as a rare specimen of the silent Englishman. I lived, too, quite out of the students' colony. To me the *Quartier Latin* (except as I went to and fro between the Hôtel Dieu and the Ecole de Medicine) was a land unknown; and the student's life—that wonderful *Vie de Bohême* which furnishes forth half the fiction of the Paris press—a condition of being, about which I had never even heard. What wonder, then, that I never arrived at Dr. Chéron's door five minutes behind time, never missed a lecture, never forgot an appointment? What wonder that, after dropping moodily into one or two of the theatres, I settled down quite quietly in my lodgings; gave up my days to study; sauntered about the lighted alleys of the Champs Elysées in the sweet spring evenings; and, going home be-

times, spent an hour or two with my books, and kept almost as early hours as in my father's house at Saxonholme?

After I had been living thus for rather longer than three weeks, I made up my mind one Sunday morning to call at Dalrymple's rooms, and enquire if he had yet arrived in Paris. It was about eleven o'clock when I reached the *Chaussée d'Antin*, and there learned that he was not only arrived, but at home. Being by this time in possession of the luxury of a card, I sent one up, and was immediately admitted. I found breakfast still upon the table; Dalrymple sitting with an open desk and cash-box before him; and, standing somewhat back, with his elbow resting on the chimney-piece, a gentleman smoking a cigar. They both looked up as I was announced, and Dalrymple, welcoming me with a hearty grasp, introduced this gentleman as *Monsieur de Simoncourt*.

M. de Simoncourt bowed, knocked the ash from his cigar, and looked as if he wished me at the Antipodes. Dalrymple was really glad to see me.

“I have been expecting you, Arbuthnot,” said he, “for the last week. If you had not soon beaten up my quarters, I should have tried, somehow, to find out yours. What have you been about all this time? Where are you located? What mischief have you been perpetrating since our expedition to the *guingette* on the river? Come, you have a thousand things to tell me!”

M. de Simoncourt looked at his watch—a magnificent affair decorated with a costly chain, and a profusion of pendant trifles—and threw the last half of his cigar into the fireplace.

“You must excuse me, *mon cher*,” said he. “I have at least a dozen calls to make before dinner.”

Dalrymple rose, readily enough, and took a roll of bank notes from the cash-box.

“If you are going,” he said, “I may as well hand you over the price of that Tilbury. When will they send it home?”

“To-morrow, undoubtedly.”

“And I am to pay fifteen hundred francs for it?”

“Just half its value!” observed M. de Simoncourt, with a shrug of his shoulders.

Dalrymple smiled, counted the notes, and handed them to his friend.

“Fifteen hundred may be half its cost,” said he; “but I doubt if I am paying much less than its full value. Just see that these are right.”

M. de Simoncourt ruffled the papers daintily over, and consigned them to his pocket-book. As he did so, I could not help observing the whiteness of his hands and the sparkle of a huge brilliant on his little finger. He was a pale, slender, olive-hued man, with very dark eyes, and glittering teeth, and a black moustache inclining superciliously upwards at each corner; somewhat too *nonchalant*, perhaps, in his manner, and somewhat too profuse in the article of jewellery; but a very elegant gentleman, nevertheless.

“*Bon !*” said he. “I am glad you have bought it. I would have taken it myself, had the thing happened a week or two earlier. Poor Duchesne! To think that

he should have come to this, after all!"

"I am sorry for him," said Dalrymple; "but it is a case of wilful ruin. He made up his mind to go to the devil, and went accordingly. I am only surprised that the crash came no sooner."

M. de Simoncourt twitched at the supercilious moustache.

"And you think you would not care to take the black mare with the Tilbury?" said he, negligently.

"No—I have a capital horse, already."

"Hah!—well—'tis almost a pity. The mare is a dead bargain. Shouldn't wonder if I buy her, after all."

"And yet you don't want her," said Dalrymple.

"Quite true; but one must have a favourite sin, and horse-flesh is mine. I shall ruin myself by it some day—*mort de ma vie!* By the way, have you seen my chestnut in harness? No? Then you will be really pleased. Goes delightfully with the grey, and manages tandem to perfection. *Parbleu!* I was forgetting—do we meet to-night?"

"Where?"

"At Chardonnier's."

Dalrymple shook his head, and turned the key in his cash-box.

"Not this evening," he replied. "I have other engagements."

"Bah! and I promised to go, believing you were sure to be of the party. St. Pol, I know, will be there, and De Brézy also."

"Chardonnier's parties are charming things in their way," said Dalrymple, somewhat coldly, "and no man enjoys Burgundy and lansquenet more heartily than myself; but one might grow to care for nothing else, and I have no desire to fall into worse habits than those I have contracted already."

M. de Simoncourt laughed a dry, short laugh, and twitched again at the supercilious moustache.

"I had no idea you were a philosopher," said he.

"Nor am I. I am a *mauvais sujet*—*mauvais* enough, already, without seeking to become worse."

“Well, adieu—I will see to this affair of the Tilbury, and desire them to let you have it by noon to-morrow.”

“A thousand thanks. I am ashamed that you have so much trouble in the matter. *Au revoir.*”

“*Au revoir.*”

Whereupon M. de Simoncourt honoured me with a passing bow, and took his departure. Being near the window, I saw him spring into an elegant cabriolet, and drive off with the showiest of high horses and the tiniest of tigers.

He was no sooner gone than Dalrymple took me by the shoulders, placed me in an easy-chair, poured out a couple of glasses of hock, and said:—

“Now, then, my young friend, your news or your life! Out with it, every word, as you hope to be forgiven!”

I had but little to tell, and for that little, found myself, as I had anticipated, heartily laughed at. My adventure at the Restaurant, my unlucky meeting with Dr. Chéron, and the history of my interview with him

next morning, delighted Dalrymple beyond measure.

Nothing would satisfy him, after this, but to call me Damon, to tease me continually about Doctor Pythias, and to remind me at every turn of the desirableness of Arcadian friendships.

"And so, Damon," said he, "you go nowhere, see nothing, and know nobody. This sort of life will never do for you! I must take you out—introduce you—get you an *entrée* into society, before I leave Paris."

"I should be heartily glad to visit at one or two private houses," I replied. "To spend the winter in this place without knowing a soul, would be something frightful."

Dalrymple looked at me half laughingly, half compassionately.

"Before I do it, however," said he, "you must look a little less like a savage, and more like a tame Christian. You must have your hair cut, and learn to tie your cravat properly. Do you possess an evening suit?"

Blushing to the tips of my ears, I not only

confessed that I was destitute of that desirable outfit ; but also that I had never yet in all my life had occasion to wear it.

“I am glad of it ; for now you are sure to be well fitted. Your tailor, depend on it, is your great civiliser, and a well made suit of clothes is in itself a liberal education. I’ll take you to Michaud—my own especial purveyor. He is a great artist. With so many yards of superfine black cloth, he will give you the tone of good society and the exterior of a gentleman. In short, he will do for you in eight or ten hours more than I could do in as many years.”

“Pray introduce me at once to this illustrious man,” I exclaimed laughingly, “and let me do him homage!”

“You will have to pay heavily for the honour,” said Dalrymple. “Of that I give you notice.”

“No matter. I am willing to pay heavily for the tone of good society and the exterior of a gentleman.”

“Very good. Take a book, then, or a cigar, and amuse yourself for five minutes

while I write a note. That done, you may command me for as long as you please."

I took the first book that came, and finding it to be a history of the horse, amused myself, instead, by observing the aspect of Dalrymple's apartment.

Rooms are eloquent biographies. They betray at once if the owner be careless or orderly, studious or idle, vulgar or refined. Flowers on the table, engravings on the walls, indicate refinement and taste; while a well filled book-case says more in favour of its possessor than the most elaborate letter of recommendation. Dalrymple's room was a monograph of himself. Careless, luxurious, disorderly, crammed with all kinds of costly things, and characterised by a sort of reckless elegance, it expressed, as I interpreted it, the very history of the man. Rich hangings; luxurious carpets; walls covered with paintings; cabinets of bronze and rare porcelain; a statuette of Rachel beside a bust of Homer; a book-case full of French novels with a sprinkling of Shakespeare and Horace; a stand of foreign arms; a lamp from Pompeii;

a silver casket full of cigars ; tables piled up with newspapers, letters, pipes, riding-whips, faded bouquets, and all kinds of miscellaneous rubbish—such were my friend's surroundings; and such, had I speculated upon them beforehand, I should have expected to find them. Dalrymple, in the meanwhile, despatched his letter with characteristic rapidity. His pen rushed over the paper like a dragoon charge, nor was once laid aside till both letter and address were finished. Just as he was sealing it, a note was brought to him by his servant—a slender, narrow, perfumed note, written on creamy paper, and adorned on the envelope with an elaborate cypher in gold and colours. Had I lived in the world of society for the last hundred seasons, I could not have interpreted the appearance of that note more sagaciously.

“It is from a lady,” said I to myself. Then seeing Dalrymple tear up his own letter immediately after reading it, and begin another, I added, still in my own mind—“And it is from the lady to whom he was writing.”

Presently he paused, laid his pen aside, and said :—

“ Arbuthnot, would you like to go with me to-morrow evening to one or two *soirées*?”

“ Can your Civiliser provide me with my evening suit in time?”

“ He? The great Michaud? Why, he would equip you for this evening, if it were necessary!”

“ In that case, I shall be very glad.”

“ *Bon!* I will call for you at ten o'clock; so do not forget to leave me your address.”

Whereupon he resumed his letter. When it was written, he returned to the subject.

“ Then I will take you to-morrow night,” said he, “to a reception at Madame Rachel’s. Hers is the most beautiful house in Paris. I know fifty men who would give their ears to be admitted to her *salons*.”

Even in the wilds of Saxonholme I had heard and read of the great *tragedienne* whose wealth vied with the Rothschilds, and whose diamonds might have graced a crown. I had looked forward to the probability of beholding her from afar off, if she was ever

to be seen on the boards of the Theatre Français ; but to be admitted to her presence—received in her house—introduced to her in person . . . it seemed ever so much too good to be true !

Dalrymple smiled good-naturedly, and put my thanks aside.

“ It is a great sight,” said he, “ and nothing more. She will bow to you—she may not even speak ; and she would pass you the next morning without remembering that she had ever seen you in her life. Actresses are a race apart, my dear fellow, and care for no one who is neither rich nor famous.”

“ I never imagined,” said I, half annoyed, “ that she would take any notice of me at all. Even a bow from such a woman is an event to be remembered.”

“ Having received that bow, then,” continued Dalrymple, “ and having enjoyed the ineffable satisfaction of returning it, you can go on with me to the house of a lady close by, who receives every Monday evening. At her *soirées* you will meet pleasant and refined people, and having been once introduced

by me, you will, I have no doubt, find the house open to you for the future."

"That would, indeed, be a privilege. Who is this lady?"

"Her name," said Dalrymple, with an involuntary glance at the little note upon his desk, "is Madame de Courcelles. She is a very charming and accomplished lady."

I decided in my own mind that Madame de Courcelles was the writer of that note.

"Is she married?" was my next question.

"She is a widow," replied Dalrymple. "Monsieur de Courcelles was many years older than his wife, and held office as a cabinet minister during the greater part of the reign of Louis Philippe. He has been dead these four or five years."

"Then she is rich?"

"No—not rich ; but sufficiently independent."

"And handsome?"

"Not handsome, either ; but graceful, and very fascinating."

Graceful, fascinating, independent, and a

widow ! Coupling these facts with the correspondence which I believed I had detected, I grouped them into a little romance, and laid out my friend's future career as confidently as if it had depended only on myself to marry him out of hand, and make all parties happy.


Dalrymple sat musing for a moment, with his chin resting on his hands and his eyes fixed on the desk. Then shaking back his hair as if he would shake back his thoughts with it, he started suddenly to his feet and said, laughingly :—

“Now, young Damon, to Michaud's—to Michaud's, with what speed we may ! Farewell to ‘Tempe and the vales of Arcady,’ and hey for civilization, and a swallow-tailed coat !”

I noticed, however, that before we left the room, he put the little note tenderly away in a drawer of his desk, and locked it with a tiny gold key that hung upon his watch-chain.

CHAPTER XIII.

I make my Début in Society.

T ten o'clock on Monday evening, Dalrymple called for me, and by ten o'clock, thanks to the great Michaud and other men of genius, I presented a faultless exterior. My friend walked round me with a candle, and then sat down and examined me critically.

"By Jove!" said he, "I don't believe I should have known you! You are a living testimony to the science of tailoring. I shall call on Michaud to-morrow, and pay my tribute of admiration!"

"I am very uncomfortable," said I, ruefully.

"Uncomfortable! nonsense — Michaud's customers don't know the meaning of the word."

"But he has not made me a single pocket!"

"And what of that? Do you suppose the great Michaud would spoil the fit of a masterpiece for your convenience?"

"What am I to do with my pocket-handkerchief?"

"Michaud's customers never need pocket-handkerchiefs."

"And then my trousers"

"Unreasonable Juvenile, what of the trousers?"

"They are so tight that I dare not sit down in them."

"Barbarian! Michaud's customers never sit down in society."

"And my boots are so small that I can hardly endure them."

"Very becoming to the foot," said Dalrymple, with exasperating indifference.

"And my collar is so stiff that it almost cuts my throat."

"Makes you hold your head up," said Dalrymple, "and leaves you no inducement to commit suicide."

I could not help laughing, despite my discomfort.

"Job himself never had such a comforter!" I exclaimed. "It would be a downright pleasure to quarrel with you."

"Put on your hat instead, and let us delay no longer," replied my friend. "My cab is waiting."

So we went down, and in another moment were driving through the lighted streets. I should hardly have chosen to confess how my heart beat when, on turning an angle of the Rue Trudon, our cab fell into the rear of three or four other carriages, passed into a courtyard crowded with arriving and departing vehicles, and drew up before an open door, whence a broad stream of light flowed out to meet us. A couple of footmen received us in a hall lighted by torches and decorated with stands of antique armour. From the centre of this hall sprang a Gothic staircase, so light, so richly sculptured, so full of niches and statues, slender columns, foliated capitals, and delicate ornamentation of every kind,

that it looked a very blossoming of the stone. Following Dalrymple up this superb staircase and through a vestibule of carved oak, I next found myself in a room that might have been the scene of Plato's symposium. Here were walls painted in classic fresco ; windows curtained with draperies of chocolate and amber ; chairs and couches of ebony, carved in antique fashion ; Etruscan amphoræ ; vases and pateræ of terra-cotta ; exquisite lamps, statuettes and candelabra in rare green bronze ; and curious parti-coloured busts of philosophers and heroes, in all kinds of variegated marbles. Powdered footmen serving modern coffee seemed here like anachronisms in livery. In such a room one should have been waited on by boys crowned with roses, and have partaken only of classic dishes—of Venafran olives or oysters from the Lucrine lake, washed down with Massic, or Chian, or honeyed Falernian.

Some half-dozen gentlemen, chatting over their coffee, bowed to Dalrymple when he came in. They were talking of the war in Algiers, and especially of the gallantry of

a certain Vicomte de Caylus, in whose deeds they seemed to take a more than ordinary interest.

“Rode single-handed right through the enemy’s camp,” said a bronzed, elderly man, with a short, grey beard.

“And escaped without a scratch,” added another, with a tiny red ribbon at his button-hole.

“He comes of a gallant stock,” said a third. “I remember his father at Austerlitz—literally cut to pieces at the head of his squadron.”

“You are speaking of de Caylus,” said Dalrymple. “What news of him from Algiers?”

“This—that having volunteered to carry some important despatches to head-quarters, he preferred riding by night through Abd-el-Kader’s camp, to taking a *détour* by the mountains,” replied the first speaker.

“A wild piece of boyish daring,” said Dalrymple, somewhat drily. “I presume he did not return by the same road?”

“I should think not. It would have been certain death a second time !”

“And this happened how long since ?”

“About a fortnight ago. But we shall soon know all particulars from himself.”

“From himself ?”

“Yes, he has obtained leave of absence—is, perhaps, by this time in Paris.”

Dalrymple set down his cup untasted, and turned away.

“Come, Arbuthnot,” he said hastily, “I must introduce you to Madame Rachel.”

We passed through a small antechamber, and into a brilliant *salon* the very reverse of antique. Here all was light and colour. Here were hangings of flowered chintz ; fantastic divans ; lounge-chairs of every conceivable shape and hue ; great Indian jars ; richly framed drawings ; stands of exotic plants ; Chinese cages, filled with valuable birds from distant climes ; folios of engravings ; and, above all, a large cabinet in marqueterie, crowded with bronzes, Chinese carvings, pastille burners, fans, medals, Dresden groups, Sèvres vases, Venetian

glass, Asiatic idols, and all kinds of precious trifles in tortoise-shell, mother o'-pearl, malachite, onyx, lapis lazuli, jasper, ivory, and mosaic. In this room, sitting, standing, turning over engravings, or grouped here and there on sofas and divans, were some twenty-five or thirty gentlemen, all busily engaged in conversation. Saluting some of these by a passing bow, my friend led the way straight through this *salon* and into a larger one immediately beyond it.

"This," he said, "is one of the most beautiful rooms in Paris. Look round and tell me if you recognise, among all her votaries, the divinity herself."

I looked round, bewildered.

"Recognise !" I echoed. "I should not recognise my own father at this moment. I feel like Abon Hassan in the palace of the Caliph."

"Or like Christopher Sly, when he wakes in the nobleman's bedchamber," said Dalrymple ; "though I should ask your pardon for the comparison. But see what it is to be an actress with forty-two thousand francs of salary per week. See these panels painted

by Müller—this chandelier by Denière, of which no copy exists—this bust of Napoleon by Canova—these hangings of purple and gold—this ceiling all carved and gilded, than which Versailles contains nothing more elaborate. *Allons donc!* have you nothing to say in admiration of so much splendour?"

I shook my head.

"What can I say? Is this the house of an actress, or the palace of a prince? But stay—that pale woman yonder, all in white, with a plain gold circlet on her head—who is she?"

"Phédre herself," replied Dalrymple. "Follow me, and be introduced."

She was sitting in a large fauteuil of purple velvet. One foot rested on a stool richly carved and gilt; one arm rested negligently on a table covered with curious foreign weapons. In her right hand she held a singular poignard, the blade of which was damascened with gold, while the handle, made of bronze and exquisitely modelled, represented a tiny human skeleton. With this ghastly toy she kept playing as she spoke,

apparently unconscious of its grim significance. She was surrounded by some ten or a dozen distinguished-looking men, most of whom were profusely *décoré*. They made way courteously at our approach. Dalrymple then presented me. I made my bow, was graciously received, and dropped modestly into the rear.

“I began to think that Captain Dalrymple had forsworn Paris,” said Rachel, still toying with the skeleton dagger. “It is surely a year since I last had this pleasure?”

“Nay, Madame, you flatter me,” said Dalrymple. “I have been absent only five months.”

“Then, you see, I have measured your absence by my loss.”

Dalrymple bowed profoundly.

Rachel turned to a young man behind her chair.

“Monsieur le Prince,” said she, “do you know what is rumoured in the *foyer* of the Français? That you have offered me your hand!”

“I offer you both my hands, in applause,

Madame, every night of your performance," replied the gentleman so addressed.

She smiled and made a feint at him with the dagger.

"Excellent!" said she. "One is not enough for a tragedian. But where is Alphonse Karr?"

"I have been looking for him all the evening," said a tall man, with an iron-grey beard. "He told me he was coming; but authors are capricious beings—the slaves of the pen."

"True; he lives by his pen—others die by it," said Rachel bitterly. "By the way, has any one seen Scribe's new Vaudeville?"

"I have," replied a bald little gentleman with a red and green ribbon in his button-hole.

"And your verdict?"

"The plot is not ill-conceived; but Scribe is only godfather to the piece. It is almost entirely written by Duverger, his *collaborateur*."

"The life of a *collaborateur*," said Rachel, "is one long act of self-abnegation. Another

takes all the honour—he all the labour. Thus soldiers fall, and their generals reap the glory.”

“A *collaborateur*,” said a cynical-looking man who had not yet spoken, “is a hackney vehicle which one hires on the road to fame, and dismisses at the end of the journey.”

“Sometimes without paying the fare,” added a gentleman who had till now been examining, weapon by weapon, all the curious poignards and pistols on the table. “But what is this singular ornament?”

And he held up what appeared to be a large bone, perforated in several places.

The bald little man with the red and green ribbon uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“It is a tibia!” said he, examining it through his double eye-glass.

“And what of that?” laughed Rachel. “Is it so wonderful to find one leg in a collection of arms? However, not to puzzle you, I may as well acknowledge that it was brought to me from Rome by a learned Italian, and is a curious antique. The Romans

made flutes of the leg-bones of their enemies, and this is one of them."

"A melodious barbarism!" exclaimed one.

"Puts a 'stop,' at all events, to the enemy's flight!" said another.

"Almost as good as drinking out of his skull," added a third.

"Or as eating him, *tout de bon*," said Rachel.

"There must be a certain satisfaction in cannibalism," observed the cynic who had spoken before. "There are people upon whom one would sup willingly."

"As, for instance, critics, who are our natural enemies," said Rachel. "*C'est à dire*, if critics were not too sour to be eaten."

"Nay, with the sweet sauce of vengeance!"

"You speak feelingly, Monsieur de Musset. I am almost sorry, for your sake, that cannibalism is out of fashion!"

"It is one of the penalties of civilization," replied de Musset, with a shrug. "Besides, one would not wish to be an epicure."

Dalrymple, who had been listening somewhat disdainfully to this skirmish of words,

here touched me on the arm and turned away.

“Don’t you hate this sort of high-pressure talk?” he said, impatiently.

“I was just thinking it so brilliant.”

“Pshaw! — conversational fireworks — every speaker bent on eclipsing every other speaker. It’s an artificial atmosphere, my dear Damon—a sort of forcing-house for good things; and I hate forced witticisms, as I hate forced peas. But have you had enough of it? Or has this feast of reason taken away your appetite for simpler fare?”

“If you mean, am I ready to go with you to Madame de Courcelles’—yes.”

“*À la bonne heure!*”

“But you are not going away without taking leave of Madame Rachel?”

“Unquestionably. Leave-taking is a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance.”

“But isn’t that very impolite?”

“*Ingénu!* Do you not know that society ignores everything disagreeable? A leave-taker sets an unpleasant example, disturbs

the harmony of things, and reminds others of their watches. Besides, he suggests unwelcome possibilities. Perhaps he finds the party dull; or, worse still, he may be going to one that is pleasanter."

By this time we were again rattling along the Boulevard. The theatres were ablaze with lights. The road was full of carriages. The *trottoir* was almost as populous as at noon. The idlers outside the *cafés* were still eating their ices and sipping their *eau-sucrée* as though, instead of being past eleven at night, it was scarcely eleven in the morning. In a few minutes, we had once more turned aside out of the great thoroughfare, and stopped at a private house in a quiet street. A carriage driving off, a cab drawing up behind our own, open windows with drawn blinds upon which were profiled passing shadows of the guests within, and the ringing tones of a soprano voice accompanied by a piano, gave sufficient indication of a party, and had served to attract a little crowd of soldiers and *gamins* about the doorway.

Having left our over-coats with a servant,

we were ushered upstairs, and, as the song was not yet ended, slipped in unannounced and stationed ourselves just between two crowded drawing-rooms, where, sheltered by the folds of a muslin curtain, we could see all that was going on in both. I observed at a glance, that I was now in a society altogether unlike that which I had just left.

At Rachel's there were present only two ladies besides herself, and those were members of her own family. Here I found at least an equal proportion of both sexes. At Rachel's a princely magnificence reigned. Here the rooms were elegant, but simple; the paintings choice but few; the ornaments costly, but in no unnecessary profusion.

"It is just the difference between taste and display," said Dalrymple. "Rachel is an actress, and Madame de Courcelles is a lady. Rachel exhibits her riches as an Indian chief exhibits the scalps of his victims—Madame De Courcelles adorns her house with no other view than to make it attractive to her friends."

"As a Greek girl covers her head with

sequins to show the amount of her fortune, and an English girl puts a rose in her hair for grace and beauty only," said I, fancying that I had made rather a clever observation. I was therefore considerably disappointed when Dalrymple merely said, "just so."

The lady in the larger room here finished her song and returned to her seat, amid a shower of *bravas*.

"She sings exquisitely," said I, following her with my eyes.

"And so she ought," replied my friend. "She is the Countess Rossi, whom you may have heard of as Mademoiselle Sontag."

"What! the celebrated Sontag?" I exclaimed.

"The same. And the gentleman to whom she is now speaking is no less famous a person than the author of *Pelham*."

I was as much delighted as a rustic at a menagerie, and Dalrymple, seeing this, continued to point out one celebrity after another, till I began no longer to remember which was which. Thus Lamartine, Horace Vernet, Scribe, Baron Humboldt, Miss Bremer, Arago,

Auber, and Sir Edwin Landseer, were successively indicated, and I thought myself one of the most fortunate fellows in Paris, only to be allowed to look upon them.

“I suppose the spirit of lion-hunting is an original instinct,” I said, presently. “Call it vulgar excitement, if you will; but I must confess that to see these people, and to be able to write about them to my father, is just the most delightful thing that has happened to me since I left home.”

“Call things by their right names, Damon,” said Dalrymple, good-naturedly. “If you were a *parvenu* giving a party, and wanted all these fine folks to be seen at your house, that would be lion-hunting; but being whom and what you are, it is hero-worship—a disease peculiar to the young; wholesome and inevitable, like the measles.”

“What have I done,” said a charming voice close by, “that Captain Dalrymple will not even deign to look upon me?”

The charming voice proceeded from the still more charming lips of an exceedingly pretty brunette in a dress of light green silk,

fastened here and there with bouquets of rosebuds. Plump, rosy, black-haired, bright-eyed, bewilderingly coquettish, this lady might have been about thirty years of age, and seemed by no means unconscious of her powers of fascination.

“I implore a thousand pardons, madame” . . . began my friend.

“*Comment !* A thousand pardons for a single offence!” exclaimed the lady. “What an unreasonable culprit !”

To which she added quite audibly, though behind the temporary shelter of her fan :—

“Who is this *beau garçon* whom you seem to have brought with you ?”

I turned aside, affecting not to hear the question ; but could not help listening, nevertheless. Of Dalrymple’s reply, however, I caught but my own name.

“So much the better,” observed the lady. “I delight in civilising handsome boys. Introduce him.”

Dalrymple tapped me on the arm.

“Madame de Marignan permits me to introduce you, *mon ami*,” said he. “Mr.

Basil Arbuthnot—Madame de Marignan.”

I bowed profoundly—all the more profoundly because I felt myself blushing to the eyes, and would not for the universe have been suspected of overhearing the preceding conversation ; nor was my timidity alleviated when Dalrymple announced his intention of going in search of Madame de Courcelles, and of leaving me in the care of Madame de Marignan.

“ Now, Damon, make the most of your opportunities,” whispered he, as he passed by. “ *Vogue la galère !*”

Vogue la galère, indeed ! As if I had anything to do with the *galère*, except to sit down in it, the most helpless of galley-slaves, and blindly submit to the gyves and chains of Madame de Marignan, who, regarding me as the lawful captive of her bow and spear, carried me off at once to a vacant *causeuse* in a distant corner.

To send me in search of a footstool, to make me hold her fan, to overwhelm me with questions and bewilder me with a thousand coquetries, were the immediate

proceedings of Madame de Marignan. A consummate tactician, she succeeded, before a quarter of an hour had gone by, in putting me at my ease, and in drawing from me everything that I had to tell—all my past; all my prospects for the future; the name and condition of my father; a description of Saxonholme, and the very date of my birth. Then she criticised all the ladies in the room, which only drew my attention more admiringly upon herself; and she quizzed all the young men, whereby I felt indirectly flattered, without exactly knowing why; and she praised Dalrymple in terms for which I could have embraced her on the spot had she been ten times less pretty, and ten times less fascinating.

I was an easy victim, after all, and scarcely worth the powder and shot of an experienced *franc-tireur*; but Madame de Marignan, according to her own confession, had a taste for civilising “handsome boys,” and as I may, perhaps, have come under that category a good many years ago, the little victory amused her! By the time, at all events,

that Dalrymple returned to tell me it was past one o'clock in the morning, and I must be introduced to the mistress of the house before leaving, my head was as completely turned as that of old Time himself.

"Past one!" I exclaimed. "Impossible! We cannot have been here half-an-hour."

At which neither Dalrymple nor Madame de Marignan could forbear smiling.

"I hope our acquaintance is not to end here, monsieur," said Madame Marignan. "I live in the Rue Castellane, and am at home to my friends every Wednesday evening."

I bowed almost to my boots.

"And to my intimates, every morning from twelve to two," she added very softly, with a dimpled smile that went straight to my heart, and set it beating like the paddle-wheels of a steamer.

I stammered some incoherent thanks, bowed again, nearly upset a servant with a tray of ices, and, covered with confusion, followed Dalrymple into the farther room. Here I was introduced to Madame de Cour-

celles, a pale, aristocratic woman some few years younger than Madame de Marignan, and received a gracious invitation to all her Monday receptions. But I was much less interested in Madame de Courcelles than I should have been a couple of hours before. I scarcely looked at her, and five minutes after I was out of her presence, could not have told whether she was fair or dark, if my life had depended on it!

“What say you to walking home?” said Dalrymple, as we went downstairs. “It is a superb night, and the fresh air would be delightful after these hot rooms.”

I assented gladly; so we dismissed the cab, and went out, arm-in-arm, along a labyrinth of quiet streets lighted by gas-lamps few and far between, and traversed only by a few homeward-bound pedestrians. Emerging presently at the back of the Madeleine, we paused for a moment to admire the noble building by moonlight; then struck across the *Marché aux Fleurs* and took our way along the Boulevard.

“Are you tired, Damon?” said Dalrymple presently.

“Not in the least,” I replied, with my head full of Madame de Marignan.

“Would you like to look in at an artists’ club close by here, where I have the *entrée*?—queer place enough, but amusing to a stranger.”

“Yes, very much.”

“Come along, then; but first button up your overcoat to the throat, and tie this coloured scarf round your neck. See, I do the same. Now take off your gloves—that’s it. And give your hat the least possible inclination to the left ear. You may turn up the bottoms of your trousers, if you like—anything to look a little slangy.”

“Is that necessary?”

“Indispensable—at all events in the honourable society of *Les Chicards*.”

“*Les Chicards*!” I repeated. “What are they?”

“It is the name of the club, and means—heaven only knows what! for Greek or Latin root it has none, and record of it there

exists not, unless in the dictionary of Argôt. And yet if you were an old Parisian and had matriculated for the last dozen years at the Bal de l'Opéra, you would know the illustrious Chicard by sight as familiarly as Punch, or Paul Pry, or Pierrot. He is a gravely comic personage with a bandage over one eye, a battered hat considerably inclining to the back of his head, a coat with a high collar and long tails, and a *tout ensemble* indescribably seedy—something between a street preacher and a travelling showman. But here we are. Take care how you come down, and mind your head."


Having turned aside some few minutes before into the Rue St. Honoré, we had thence diverged down a narrow street with a gutter running along the middle and no foot pavements on either side. The houses seemed to be nearly all shops, some few of which, for the retailing of *charbonnerie*, stale vegetables, uninviting cooked meats, and so forth, were still open; but that before which we halted was closely shuttered up, with only a private door open at the side,

lighted by a single oil-lamp. Following my friend for a couple of yards along the dim passage within, I became aware of strange sounds, proceeding apparently from the bowels of the earth, and found myself at the head of a steep staircase, down which it was necessary to proceed with my body bent almost double, in consequence of the close proximity of the ceiling and the steps. At the foot of this staircase came another dim passage and another oil-lamp over a low door, at which Dalrymple paused a moment before entering. The sounds which I had heard above now resolved themselves into their component parts, consisting of roars of laughter, snatches of songs, clinkings of glasses, and thumpings of bottles upon tables, to the accompaniment of a deep bass hum of conversation, all of which prepared me to find a very merry company within.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Honourable Society of Les Chicards.

“When a set of men find themselves agree in any particular, though never so trivial, they establish themselves into a kind of fraternity, and meet once or twice a week.”
—*Spectator*.

T was a long, low room lighted by gas, with a table reaching from end to end. Round about this table, in various stages of conviviality and conversation, were seated some thirty or forty men, capped, bearded, and eccentric-looking, with all kinds of queer blouses and wonderful heads of hair. Dropping into a couple of vacant chairs at the lower end of this table, we called for a bottle of Chablis, lit our cigars, and fell in with the general business of the evening. At the top, dimly visible through a dense

fog of tobacco smoke, sat a stout man in a green coat fastened by a belt round the waist. He was evidently the President, and, instead of a hammer, had a small bugle lying by his side, which he blew from time to time to enforce silence.

Somewhat perplexed by the general aspect of the club, I turned to my companion for an explanation.

"Is it possible," I asked, "that these amazing individuals are all artists and gentlemen?"

"Artists, every one," replied Dalrymple; "but as to their claim to be gentlemen, I won't undertake to establish it. After all, the *Chicards* are not first-rate men."

"What are they, then?"

"Oh, the Helots of the profession—hewers of wood-engravings, and drawers of water-colours, with a sprinkling of daguerreotypists, and academy students. But hush—somebody is going to sing!"

And now, heralded by a convulsive flourish from the President's bugle, a young *Chicard* whose dilapidated outer man sufficiently

contradicted the burthen of his song, shouted with better will than skill, a *chanson* of Beranger's, every verse of which ended with:—

“J'ai cinquante écus,
J'ai cinquante écus,
J'ai cinquante écus de rente !”

Having brought this performance to a satisfactory conclusion, the singer sat down amid great clapping of hands and clattering of glasses, and the President, with another flourish on the bugle, called upon one Monsieur Tourterelle. Monsieur Tourterelle was a tall, gaunt, swarthy personage, who appeared to have cultivated his beard at the expense of his head, since the former reached nearly to his waist, while the latter was as bare as a billiard-ball. Preparing himself for the effort with a wine-glass full of raw cognac, this gentleman leaned back in his chair, stuck his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat, fixed his eyes on the ceiling, and plunged at once into a doleful ballad about one Mademoiselle Rosine, and a certain village *auprès de la mer*, which seemed to be in an indefinite number of verses and amused

no one but himself. In the midst of this ditty, just as the audience had begun to testify their impatience by much whispering and shuffling of feet, an elderly *Chicard*, with a very bald and shiny head, was discovered to have fallen asleep in the seat next but one to my own; whereupon my nearest neighbour, a merry-looking young fellow with a profusion of rough light hair surmounted by a cap of scarlet cloth, forthwith charred a cork in one of the candles, and decorated the bald head of the sleeper with a comic countenance and a pair of huge mustachios. An uproarious burst of laughter was the immediate result, and the singer, interrupted somewhere about his eighteenth verse, subsided into offended silence.

“Monsieur Müller is requested to favour the honourable society with a song,” cried the President, as soon as the tumult had somewhat subsided.

My red-capped neighbour, answering to that name, begged to be excused, on the score of having pledged his *ut de poitrine* a week since at the Mont de Piété, without

yet having been able to redeem it. This apology was received with laughter, hisses, and general incredulity.

“But,” he added, “I am willing to relate an adventure that happened to myself in Rome two winters ago, if my honourable brother *Chicards* will be pleased to hear it.”

An immense burst of approbation from all but Monsieur Tourterelle and the bald sleeper, followed this announcement; and so, after a preliminary *grog au vin* and another explosive demonstration on the part of the chairman, Monsieur Müller thus began :—

THE STUDENT'S STORY.

“When I was in Rome, I lodged in the Via Margutta, which, for the benefit of those who have not been there, may be described as a street of studios and stables, crossed at one end by a little roofed gallery with a single window, like a shabby ‘Bridge of Sighs.’ A gutter runs down the middle, interrupted occasionally by heaps of stable-litter; and the perspective is damaged by

rows of linen suspended across the street at uncertain intervals. The houses in this agreeable thoroughfare are dingy, dilapidated, and comfortless, and all which are not in use as stables, are occupied by artists. However, it was a very jolly place, and I never was happier anywhere in my life. I had but just touched my little patrimony, and I was acquainted with plenty of pleasant fellows who used to come down to my rooms at night from the French Academy where they had been studying all day. Ah, what evenings those were! What suppers we used to have in from the *Lepre*! What lots of Orvieto we drank! And what a mountain of empty wicker bottles had to be cleared away from the little square yard with the solitary lemon-tree at the back of the house!"

"Come, Müller—no fond memories!" cried a student in a holland blouse. "Get on with the story."

"Ay, get on with the story!" echoed several voices.

To which Müller, who took advantage of

the interruption to finish his *grog au vin*, deigned no reply.

“Well,” he continued, “like a good many other fellows who, having everything to learn and nothing to do, fancy themselves great geniuses only because they are in Rome, I put a grand brass plate on the door, testifying to all passers-by that mine was the STUDIO DI HERR FRANZ MÜLLER; and, having done this, I believed, of course, that my fortune was to be made out of hand. Nothing came of it, however. People in search of Dessoulavy’s rooms knocked occasionally to ask their way, and a few English and Americans dropped in from time to time to stare about them, after the free-and-easy fashion of foreigners in Rome; but, for all this, I found no patrons. Thus several months went by, during which I studied from the life, worked hard at the antique, and relieved the monotony of study with occasional trips to Frascati or supper parties at the Café Greco.”

“The story! the story!” interrupted a dozen impatient voices.

“All in good time,” said Müller, with provoking indifference. “We are now coming to it.”

And assuming an attitude expressive of mystery, he dropped his voice, looked round the table, and proceeded :—

“It was on the last evening of the Carnival. It had been raining at intervals during the day, but held up for a good hour just at dusk, as if on purpose for the *moccoli*. Scarcely, however, had the guns of St. Angelo thundered an end to the frolic, when the rain came down again in torrents, and put out the last tapers that yet lingered along the Corso. Wet, weary, and splashed from head to foot with mud and tallow, I came home about seven o’clock, having to dine and dress before going to a masked-ball in the evening. To light my stove, change my wet clothes, and make the best of a half-cold *trattore* dinner, were my first proceedings; after which, I laid out my costume ready to put on, wrapped myself in a huge cloak, swallowed a tumbler full of hot cognac and water, and lay down in front of

the fire, determined to have a sound nap and a thorough warming, before venturing out again that night. I fell asleep, of course, and never woke till roused by a tremendous peal upon the studio-bell, about two hours and a half afterwards. More dead than alive, I started to my feet. The fire had gone out in the stove; the room was in utter darkness; and the bell still pealed loud enough to raise the neighbourhood.

“ ‘Who’s there?’ I said, half-opening the door, through which the wind and rain came rushing. ‘And what, in the name of ten thousand devils, do you want?’

“ ‘I want an artist,’ said my visitor, in Italian. ‘Are you one?’

“ ‘I flatter myself that I am,’ replied I, still holding the door tolerably close.

“ ‘Can you paint heads?’

“ ‘Heads, figures, landscapes—anything,’ said I, with my teeth chattering like castanets.

“The stranger pushed the door open, walked in without further ceremony, closed

it behind him, and said in a low, distinct voice :—

“ ‘ Could you take the portrait of a dead man ? ’

“ ‘ Of a dead man ? ’ I stammered. ‘ I— I Suppose I strike a light ? ’

“ ‘ The stranger laid his hand upon my arm.

“ ‘ Not till you have given me an answer,’ said he. ‘ Yes or no ? Remember, you will be paid well for your work.’

“ ‘ Well, then—yes,’ I replied.

“ ‘ And can you do it at once ? ’

“ ‘ At once ? ’

“ ‘ Ay, Signore, will you bring your colours, and come with me this instant—or must I seek some other painter ? ’

“ ‘ I thought of the masked-ball, and sighed ; but the promise of good payment, and, above all, the peculiarity of the adventure, determined me.

“ ‘ Nay, if it is to be done,’ said I, ‘ one time is as good as another. Let me strike a light, and I will at once pack up my colours and come with you.’

“*Bene!*” said the stranger. ‘But be as quick as you can, Signore, for time presses.’

“I was quick, you may be sure, and yet not so quick but that I found time to look at my strange visitor. He was a dark, elderly man dressed in a suit of plain black, and might have been a clerk, or a tradesman, or a confidential servant. As soon as I was ready, he took the lead; conducted me to a carriage which was waiting at the corner of a neighbouring street; took his place respectfully on the opposite seat; pulled down both the blinds, and gave the word to drive on. I never knew by what streets we went, or to what part of Rome he took me; but the way seemed long and intricate. At length, we stopped and alighted. The night was pitch-dark, and still stormy. I saw before me only the outline of a large building, indistinct and gloomy, and a small open door dimly lighted from within. Hurried across the strip of narrow pavement, and shut in immediately, I had no time to identify localities—no choice, except to follow my conductor and blindly pursue the

adventure to its close. Having entered by a back door, we went up and down a labyrinth of staircases and passages, for the mere purpose, as it seemed, of bewildering me as much as possible—then paused before an oaken door at the end of the corridor. Here my conductor signified by a gesture that I was to precede him.

“It was a large, panelled chamber, richly furnished. A wood fire smouldered on the hearth—a curtained alcove to the left partly concealed a bed—a corresponding alcove to the right, fitted with altar and crucifix, served as an oratory. In the centre of the room stood a table covered with a cloth. It needed no second glance to tell me what object lay beneath that cloth, uplifting it in ghastly outline! My conductor pointed to the table, and asked if there was anything I needed. To this I replied that I must have more light and more fire, and so proceeded to disembarass myself of my cloak, and prepare my palette. In the meantime, he threw on a log and some pine-cones, and went to fetch an additional lamp.

“Left alone with the body and impelled by an irresistible impulse, I rolled back the cloth and saw before me the corpse of a young man in a fancy dress—a magnificent fellow cast in the very mould of strength and grace, and measuring his six feet, if an inch. The features were singularly handsome; the brow open and resolute; the hair dark, and crisp with curls. Looking more closely, I saw that a lock had been lately cut from the right temple, and found one of the severed hairs upon the cheek, where it had fallen. The dress was that of a jester of the middle ages, half scarlet and half white, with a rich belt round the waist. In this belt, as if in horrible mockery of the dead, was stuck a tiny baton surmounted by a fool’s cap, and hung with silver bells. Looking down thus upon the body—so young, so beautiful, so evidently unprepared for death—a conviction of foul play flashed upon me with all the suddenness and certainty of revelation. Here were no appearances of disease and no signs of strife. The expression was not that of a man who had

fallen weapon in hand. Neither, however, was it that of one who had died in the agony of poison. The longer I looked, the more mysterious it seemed; yet the more I felt assured that there was guilt at the bottom of the mystery.

“While I was yet under the first confused and shuddering impression of this doubt, my guide came back with a powerful solar lamp, and, seeing me standing beside the body, said sharply:—

“‘Well, Signore, you look as if you had never seen a dead man before in all your life!’

“‘I have seen plenty,’ I replied; ‘but never one so young and so handsome.’

“‘He dropped down quite suddenly,’ said he, volunteering the information, ‘and died in a few minutes.’ Then finding that I remained silent, added:—

“‘But I am told that it is always so in cases of heart-disease.’

“I turned away without replying, and, having placed the lamp to my satisfaction, began rapidly sketching in my subject. My

instructions were simple. I was to give the head only; to produce as rapid an effect with as little labour as possible; to alter nothing; to add nothing; and, above all, to be ready to leave the house before day-break. So I set steadily to work, and my conductor, establishing himself in an easy-chair by the fire, watched my progress for some time, and then, as the night advanced, fell profoundly asleep. Thus, hour after hour went by, and, absorbed in my work, I painted on, unconscious of fatigue—I might almost say with something of a morbid pleasure in the task before me. The silence within; the raving of the wind and rain without; the solemn mystery of death, and the still more solemn mystery of crime which, as I followed out train after train of wild conjectures, grew to still deeper conviction, had each and all their own gloomy fascination. Was it not possible, I asked myself, by mere force of will to penetrate the secret? Was it not possible to study that dead face till the springs of thought so lately stilled within the stricken brain should

vibrate once more, if only for an instant, as wire vibrates to wire, and sound to sound? Could I not, by long studying of the passive mouth, compel some sympathetic revelation of the last word that it uttered, though that revelation took no outward form, and were communicable to the apprehension only? Pondering thus, I lost myself in a labyrinth of fantastic reveries, till the hand and the brain worked independently of each other—the one swiftly reproducing upon canvas the outer lineaments of the dead; the other labouring to retrace foregone facts of which no palpable evidence remained. Thus my work progressed; thus the night waned; thus the sleeper by the fireside stirred from time to time, or moaned at intervals in his dreams.

“At length, when many hours had gone by and I began to be conscious of the first languor of sleeplessness, I heard, or fancied I heard, a light sound in the corridor without. I held my breath, and listened. As I listened, it ceased—was renewed—drew nearer—paused outside the door. Involun-

tarily, I rose and looked round for some means of defence, in case of need. Was I brought here to perpetuate the record of a crime, and was I, when my task was done, to be silenced in a dungeon, or a grave? This thought flashed upon me almost before I was conscious of the horror it involved. At the same moment, I saw the handle of the door turned slowly and cautiously—then held back—and then, after a brief pause, the door itself gradually opening.”

Here the student paused as if overcome by the recollection of that moment, and passed his hand nervously across his brow. I took the liberty of pushing our bottle of Chablis towards him, for which he thanked me with a nod and a smile, and filled his glass to the brim.

“Well?” cried two or three voices eagerly; my own being one of them. “The door opened—what then?”

“And a lady entered,” he continued. “A lady dressed in black from head to foot, with a small lamp in her hand. Seeing me, she laid her finger significantly on her lip,

closed the door as cautiously as she had opened it, and, with the faltering, uncertain steps of one just risen from a sick bed, came over to where I had been sitting, and leaned for support against my chair. She was very pale, very calm, very young and beautiful, with just that look of passive despair in her face that one sees in Guido's portrait of Beatrice Cenci. Standing thus, I observed that she kept her eyes turned from the corpse, and her attention concentrated on the portrait. So several minutes passed, and neither of us spoke nor stirred. Then, slowly, shudderingly, she turned, grasped me by the arm, pointed to the dead form stretched upon the table, and, less with her breath than by the motion of her lips, shaped out the one word :—‘ *Murdered !* ’

“Stunned by this confirmation of my doubts, I could only clasp my hands in mute horror, and stare helplessly from the lady to the corpse, from the corpse to the sleeper. Wildly, feverishly, with all her calmness turned to eager haste, she then bent over the body, tore open the rich doublet, turned back the shirt, and,

without uttering one syllable, pointed to a tiny puncture just above the region of the heart—a spot so small, so insignificant, such a mere speck upon the marble, that but for the pale violet discoloration which spread round it like a halo, I could scarcely have believed it to be the cause of death. The wound had evidently bled inwardly, and, being inflicted with some singularly slender weapon, had closed again so completely as to leave an aperture no larger than might have been caused by the prick of a needle. While I was yet examining it, the fire fell together, and my conductor stirred uneasily in his sleep. To cover the body hastily with the cloth and resume my seat, was, with me, the instinctive work of a moment; but he was quiet again the next instant, and breathing heavily. With trembling hands, my visitor next re-closed the shirt and doublet, replaced the outer covering, and bending down till her lips almost touched my ear, whispered :—

“ ‘ You have seen it. If called upon to do so, will you swear it ? ’ ”

“ I promised.

“ ‘ You will not let yourself be intimidated by threats? nor bribed by gold? nor lured by promises?’

“ ‘ Never, so help me heaven!’

* “ She looked into my eyes, as if she would read my very soul; then, before I knew what she was about to do, seized my hand, and pressed it to her lips.

“ ‘ I believe you,’ she said. ‘ I believe, and I thank you. Not a word to him that you have seen me’—here she pointed to the sleeper by the fire. ‘ He is faithful; but not to my interests alone. I dare tell you no more—at all events, not now. Heaven bless and reward you. In this portrait you give me the only treasure—the only consolation of my future life!’

“ So saying, she took a ring from her finger, pressed it, without another word, into my unwilling hand; and, with the same passive dreary look that her face had worn on first entering, took up her lamp again, and glided from the room.

“ How the next hour, or half hour, went

by, I know not—except that I sat before the canvas like one dreaming. Now and then I added a few touches ; but mechanically, and, as it were, in a trance of wonder and dismay. I had, however, made such good progress before being interrupted, that when my companion woke and told me it would soon be day and I must make haste to be gone, the portrait was even more finished than I had myself hoped to make it in the time. So I packed up my colours and palette again, and, while I was doing so, observed that he not only drew the cloth once more over the features of the dead, but concealed the likeness behind the altar in the oratory, and even restored the chairs to their old positions against the wall. This done, he extinguished the solar lamp ; put it out of sight ; desired me once more to follow him ; and led the way back along the same labyrinth of staircases and corridors by which he brought me. It was grey dawn as he hurried me into the coach. The blinds were already down—the door was instantly closed—again we seemed to be going through an in-

finite number of streets—again we stopped, and I found myself at the corner of the Via Margutta.

“ ‘Alight, Signore,’ said the stranger, speaking for the first time since we started. ‘Alight—you are but a few yards from your own door. Here are a hundred scudi; and all that you have now to do, is to forget your night’s work, as if it had never been.’

“With this he closed the carriage door, the horses dashed on again, and, before I had time even to see if any arms were blazoned on the panels, the whole equipage had disappeared.

“And here, strange to say, the adventure ended. I never was called upon for evidence. I never saw anything more of the stranger, or the lady. I never heard of any sudden death, or accident, or disappearance having taken place about that time; and I never even obtained any clue to the neighbourhood of the house in which these things took place. Often and often afterwards, when I was strolling by night along the streets of Rome, I lingered before some old

palazzo, and fancied that I recognized the gloomy outline that caught my eye in that hurried transit from the carriage to the house. Often and often I paused and started, thinking that I had found at last the very side-door by which I entered. But these were mere guesses after all. Perhaps that house stood in some remote quarter of the city where my footsteps never went again—perhaps in some neighbouring street or piazza, where I passed it every day! At all events, the whole thing vanished like a dream, and, but for the ring and the hundred scudi, a dream I should by this time believe it to have been. The scudi, I am sorry to say, were spent within a month—the ring I have never parted from, and here it is.”

Hereupon the student took from his finger a superb ruby set between two brilliants of inferior size, and allowed it to pass from hand to hand, all round the table. Exclamations of surprise and admiration, accompanied by all sorts of conjectures and comments, broke from every lip.

"The dead man was the lady's lover," said one. "That is why she wanted his portrait."

"Of course, and her husband had murdered him," said another.

"Who, then, was the man in black?" asked a third.

"A servant, to be sure. She said, if you remember, that he was faithful; but not devoted to her interests alone. That meant that he would obey her to the extent of procuring for her the portrait of her lover; but that he did not choose to betray his master, even though his master was a murderer."

"But if so, where was the master?" said the first speaker. "Is it likely that he would have neglected to conceal the body during all these hours?"

"Certainly. Nothing more likely, if he were a man of the world, and knew how to play his game out boldly to the end. Have we not been told that it was the last night of the Carnival, and what better could he do, to avert suspicion, than show himself at as many balls as he could visit in the course of

the evening? But really, this ring is magnificent!"

"Superb. The ruby alone must be worth a thousand francs."

"To say nothing of the diamonds, and the setting," observed the next to whom it was handed.

At length, after having gone nearly the round of the table, the ring came to a little dark, sagacious-looking man, just one seat beyond Dalrymple's, who peered at it suspiciously on every side, breathed upon it, rubbed it bright again upon his coat-sleeve, and, finally, held the stones up sideways between his eyes and the light.

"Bah!" said he, sending it on with a contemptuous fillip of the forefinger and thumb. "Glass and paste, *mon ami*. Not worth five francs of anybody's money."

Müller, who had been eyeing him all the time with an odd smile lurking about the corners of his mouth, emptied his last drop of Chablis, turned the glass over on the table, bottom upwards, and said very coolly:—

"Well, I'm sorry for that; because I gave

seven francs for it myself this morning, in the Palais Royale."

"You!"

"Seven francs!"

"Bought in the Palais Royale!"

"What does he mean?"

"Mean?" echoed the student, in reply to this chorus of exclamations. "I mean that I bought it this morning, and gave seven francs for it. It is not every morning of my life, let me tell you, that I have seven francs to throw away on my personal appearance."

"But then the ring that the lady took from her finger?"

"And the murder?"

"And the servant in black?"

"And the hundred scudi?"

"One great invention from beginning to end, Messieurs les Chicards, and being got up expressly for your amusement, I hope you liked it. *Garçon!*—another *grog au vin*, and sweeter than the last!"

It would be difficult to say whether the Chicards were most disappointed or de-

lighted at this *dénoûment*—disappointed at its want of fact, or delighted with the story-weaving power of Herr Franz Müller. They expressed themselves, at all events, with a tumultuous burst of applause, in the midst of which we rose and left the room. When we once more came out into the open air, the stars had disappeared and the air was heavy with the damps of approaching day-break. Fortunately, we caught an empty *fiacre* in the next street, and, as we were nearer the Rue du Faubourg Montmartre than the Chaussée d'Antin, Dalrymple set me down first.

“Adieu, Damon,” he said, laughingly, as we shook hands through the window. “If we don’t meet before, come and dine with me next Sunday at seven o’clock—and don’t dream of dreadful murders, if you can help it!”


I did not dream of dreadful murders. I dreamt, instead, of Madame de Marignan, and never woke the next morning till eleven o’clock, just two hours later than the time at which I should have presented myself at Dr. Chéron’s.

CHAPTER XV.

What it is to be a Cavaliere Servente.

“Everye white will have its blacke,
And everye sweet its sowre.”

Old Ballad.

EITHER the example of Oscar Dallymple nor the broadcloth of the great Michaud, achieved half so much for my education as did the apprenticeship I was destined to serve to Madame de Marignan. Having once made up her mind to civilize me, she spared no pains for the accomplishment of that end, cost what it might to herself—or me. Before I had been for one week her subject, she taught me how to bow; how to pick up a pocket-handkerchief; how to present a bouquet; how to hold a fan; how to pay a compliment; how to turn

over the leaves of a music-book—in short, how to obey and anticipate every imperious wish; and how to fetch and carry, like a dog. My vassalage began from the very day when I first ventured to call upon her. Her house was small, but very elegant, and she received me in a delicious little room overlooking the Champs Elysées—a very nest of flowers, books, and birds. Before I had breathed the air of that fatal boudoir for one quarter of an hour, I was as abjectly her slave as the poodle with the rose-coloured collar which lay curled upon a velvet cushion at her feet.

“I shall elect you my *cavaliere servente*,” said she, after I had twice nervously risen to take my leave within the first half hour, and twice been desired to remain a little longer. “Will you accept the office?”

I thought it the greatest privilege under heaven. Perhaps I said so.

“The duties of the situation are onerous,” added she, “and I ought not to accept your allegiance without setting them before you. In the first place, you will have to bring me

every new novel of George Sand, Flaubert, or About, on the day of publication."

"I will move heaven and earth to get them the day before, if that be all!" I exclaimed.

Madame de Marignan nodded approvingly, and went on telling off my duties, one by one, upon her pretty fingers.

"You will have to accompany me to the Opera at least twice a week, on which occasions you will bring me a bouquet—canelias being my favourite flowers."

"Were they the flowers that bloom but once in a century," said I, with more enthusiasm than sense, "they should be yours!"

Madame de Marignan smiled and nodded again.

"When I drive in the Bois, you will sometimes take a seat in my carriage, and sometimes ride beside it, like an attentive cavalier."

I was just about to avow that I had no horse, when I remembered that I could borrow Dalrymple's, or hire one, if necessary; so I checked myself, and bowed.

“When I go to an exhibition,” said Madame de Marignan, “it will be your business to look out the pictures in the catalogue—when I walk, you will carry my parasol—when I go into a shop, you will take care of my dog—when I embroider, you will wind off my silks, and look for my scissors—when I want amusement, you must make me laugh—and when I am sleepy, you must read to me. In short, my *cavaliere servente* must be my shadow.”

“Then, like your shadow, Madame,” said I, “his place is ever at your feet, and that is all I desire!”

Madame de Marignan laughed outright, and showed the loveliest little double row of pearls in all the world.

“Admirable!” said she. “Quite an elegant compliment, and worthy of an accomplished lady-killer! *Allons!* you are a promising scholar.”

“In all that I have dared to say, Madame, I am, at least, sincere,” I added, abashed by the kind of praise.

“Sincere? Of course you are sincere.

Who ever doubted it? Nay, to blush like that is enough to spoil the finest compliment in the world. There—it is three o'clock, and at half-past I have an engagement, for which I must now make my *toilette*. Come to-morrow evening to my box at the *Italiens*, and so adieu. Stay—being my *cavaliere*, I permit you, at parting, to kiss my hand.”

Trembling, breathless, scarcely daring to touch it with mine, I lifted the soft little hand to my lips, stammered something which was, no doubt, sufficiently foolish, and hurried away, as if I were treading on air and breathing sunshine.

All the rest of that day went by in a kind of agreeable delirium. I walked about, almost without knowing where I went. I talked, without exactly knowing what I said. I have some recollection of marching to and fro among the side alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, which at that time was really a woody park, and not a pleasure garden—of lying under a tree, and listening to the birds overhead, and indulging myself in

some idiotic romance about love, and solitude, and Madame de Marignan—of wandering into a *restaurant* somewhere about seven o'clock, and sitting down to a dinner for which I had no appetite—of going back, some time during the evening, to the Rue Castellane, and walking to and fro on the opposite side of the way, looking up for ever so long at the darkened windows where my divinity did not show herself—of coming back to my lodgings, weary, dusty, and not a bit more sober, somewhere about eleven o'clock at night, driven to bed by sheer fatigue, and, even then, too much in love to go to sleep !

The next day I went through my duties at Dr. Chéron's, and attended an afternoon lecture at the hospital ; but mechanically, like one dreaming. In the evening, I presented myself at the Opera, where Madame de Marignan received me very graciously, and deigned to accept a superb bouquet for which I had paid sixteen francs. I found her surrounded by elegant men, who looked upon me as nobody, and treated me accord-

ingly. Driven to the back of the box where I could neither speak to her, nor see the stage, nor achieve even a glimpse of the house, I spent an evening which, certainly, fell short of my anticipations. I had, however, the gratification of seeing my bouquet thrown to Grisi at the end of the second act, and was permitted the privilege of going in search of Madame de Marignan's carriage, while somebody else handed her downstairs and assisted her with her cloak. A whispered word of thanks, a tiny pressure of the hand, and the words "come early to-morrow," compensated me, nevertheless, for every disappointment, and sent me home as blindly happy as ever.

The next day I called upon her, according to command, and was transported to the seventh heaven by receiving permission to accompany her to a morning concert, whereby I missed two lectures, and spent ten francs.

On the Sunday, having hired a good horse for the occasion, I had the honour of riding beside her carriage till some better mounted

acquaintance came to usurp my place and her attention; after which I was forced to drop behind and bear the eclipse of my glory as philosophically as I could.

Thus day after day went by, and, for the delusive sake of Madame de Marignan's bright eyes, I neglected my studies, spent my money, wasted my time, and incurred the displeasure of Dr. Chéron. Led on from folly to folly, I was perpetually buoyed up by coquetries which meant nothing, and as perpetually mortified, disappointed, and neglected. I hoped; I feared; I fretted; I lost my sleep and my appetite; I felt dissatisfied with all the world, sometimes blaming myself, and sometimes her—yet ready to excuse and forgive her at a moment's notice. A boy in experience even more than in years, I loved with a boy's headlong passion, and suffered with all a boy's acute susceptibility. I was intensely sensitive—abashed by a slight, humbled by a glance, and so easily wounded that there were often times when, seeing myself forgotten, I could with difficulty drive back the tears that kept

rising to my eyes. On the other hand, I was as easily elated. A kind word, an encouraging smile, a lingering touch upon my sleeve, was enough at any time to make me forget all my foregone troubles. How often the mere gift of a flower sent me home rejoicing! How the tiniest show of preference set my heart beating! How proud I was if mine was the arm chosen to lead her to her carriage! How more than happy, if allowed for even one half hour in the whole evening to occupy the seat beside her own! To dangle after her the whole day long—to traverse all Paris on her errands—to wait upon her pleasure like a slave, and this, too, without even expecting to be thanked for my devotion, seemed the most natural thing in the world. She was capricious; but caprice became her. She was exacting; but her exactions were so coquettish and attractive, that one would not have wished her more reasonable. She was, at least, ten or twelve years my senior; but boys proverbially fall in love with women older than themselves, and this one was in all

respects so charming, that I do not, even now, wonder at my infatuation.

After all, there are few things under heaven more beautiful, or more touching, than a boy's first love.


Passionate is it as a man's—pure as a woman's—trusting as a child's—timid, through the very excess of its unselfishness—chivalrous, as though handed down direct from the days of old romance—poetical beyond the utterances of the poet. To the boy-lover, his mistress is only something less than a divinity. He believes in her truth as in his own; in her purity, as in the sun at noon. Her practised arts of voice and manner are, in his eyes, the unstudied graces that spring as naturally from her beauty as the scent from the flower. Single-hearted himself, it seems impossible that she whom he adores should trifle with the most sacred sentiment he has ever known. Conscious of his own devotion, he cannot conceive that his wealth is poured forth in vain, and that he is but the plaything of her idle hours. Yet it is so. The boy's first love is almost

always misplaced ; seldom rated at its true value ; hardly ever productive of anything but disappointment. Aspirant of the highest mysteries of the soul, he passes through the ordeal of fire and tears, happy if he keep his faith unshaken and his heart pure, for the wiser worship hereafter. We all know this ; and few know it better than myself. Yet, with all its suffering, which of us would choose to obliterate all record of his first romance ? Which of us would be without the memory of its smiles and tears, its sunshine and its clouds ? Not I for one.

.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Contretemps in a Carriage.

Y slavery lasted somewhat longer than three weeks, and less than a month; and was brought, oddly enough, to an abrupt conclusion. This was how it happened.

I had, as usual, attended Madame de Marignan one evening to the Opera, and found myself, also as usual, neglected for a host of others. There was one man in particular whom I hated, and whom (perhaps because I hated him) she distinguished rather more than the rest. His name was Delaroche, and he called himself Monsieur le Comte Delaroche. Most likely he was a Count—I have no reason to doubt his title; but I chose to doubt it for mere spite, and

because he was loud and conceited, and wore a little red and green ribbon in his button-hole. He had, besides, an offensive sense of my youth and his own superiority, which I have never forgiven to this day. On the particular occasion of which I am now speaking, this person had made his appearance in Madame de Marignan's box at the close of the first act, established himself in the seat behind hers, and there held the lists against all comers during the remainder of the evening. Everything he said, everything he did, aggravated me. When he looked through her lorgnette, I loathed him. When he admired her fan, I longed to thrust it down his throat. When he held her bouquet to his odious nose (the bouquet that I had given her!) I felt it would have been justifiable manslaughter to take him up bodily, and pitch him over into the pit.

At length the performance came to a close, and M. Delaroche, having taken upon himself to arrange Madame de Marignan's cloak, carry Madame de Marignan's fan, and put Madame de Marignan's opera-glass into

its morocco case, completed his officiousness by offering his arm and conducting her into the lobby, whilst I, outwardly indifferent but inwardly boiling, dropped behind, and consigned him silently to all the torments of the seven circles.

It was an oppressive autumnal night without a star in the sky, and so still that one might have carried a lighted taper through the streets. Finding it thus warm, Madame de Marignan proposed walking down the line of carriages, instead of waiting till her own came up ; and so she and M. Delaroche led the way and I followed. Having found the carriage, he assisted her in, placed her fan and bouquet on the opposite seat, lingered a moment at the open door, and had the unparalleled audacity to raise her hand to his lips at parting. As for me, I stood proudly back, and lifted my hat.

“ *Comment !* ” she said, holding out her hand—the pretty, ungloved hand that had just been kissed—“ is that your good night ? ”

I bowed over the hand. I would not

have touched it with my lips at that moment for all the wealth of Paris.

"You are coming to me to-morrow morning at twelve?" she murmured tenderly.

"If Madame desires it."

"Of course I desire it. I am going to Auteuil, to look at a house for a friend—and to Pignot's for some flowers—and to Lubin's for some scent—and to a host of places. What should I do without you? Nay, why that grave face? Have I done anything to offend you?"

"Madame, I—I confess that——"

"That you are jealous of that absurd De-
laroche, who is so much in love with himself that he has no place in his heart for any one else! *Fi donc!* I am ashamed of you. There—adieu, twelve to-morrow!"

And with this she laughed, waved her hand, gave the signal to drive on, and left me looking after the carriage, still irritated, but already half consoled.

I then sauntered moodily on, thinking of my tyrant, and her caprices, and her beauty.

Her smile, for instance ; surely it was the sweetest smile in the world—if only she were less lavish of it ! Then, what a delicious little hand—if mine were the only lips permitted to kiss it ! Why was she so charming?—or why, being so charming, need she prize the attentions of every *flaneur* who had only enough wit to admire her ? Was I not a fool to believe that she cared more for my devotion than for another's ! Did I believe it ? Yes . . . no . . . sometimes. But then that “sometimes” was only when under the immediate influence of her presence. She fascinated me ; but she would fascinate a hundred others in precisely the same way. It was true that she accepted from me more devotion, more worship, more time, more outward and visible homage than from any other. Was I not her *Cavaliere servente* ? Did she not accept my bouquets ? Did she not say the other day, when I gave her that volume of Tennyson, that she loved all that was English for my sake ? Surely, I was worse than ungrateful, when, having so much, I was still dissatisfied ! Why was I not the

happiest fellow in Paris? Why

My meditations were here interrupted by a sudden flash of very vivid lightning, followed by a low muttering of distant thunder. I paused, and looked round. The sky was darker than ever, and though the air was singularly stagnant, I could hear among the uppermost leaves of the tall trees that stealthy rustling that generally precedes a storm. Unfortunately for myself, I had not felt disposed to go home at once on leaving the theatre; but, being restless alike in mind and body, had struck down through the Place Vendôme and up the Rue de Rivoli, intending to come home by a circuitous route. At this precise moment I found myself in the middle of the Place de la Concorde, with Cleopatra's needle towering above my head, the lamps in the Champs Elysées twinkling in long chains of light through the blank darkness before me, and no vehicle anywhere in sight. To be caught in a heavy shower, was not, certainly, an agreeable prospect for one who had just emerged from the opera in the thinnest of boots and the

lightest of folding hats, with neither umbrella nor paletôt of proof; so, having given a hasty glance in every direction from which a cab might be expected, I took valiantly to my heels, and made straight for the Madeleine.

Long before I had accomplished half the distance, however, another flash announced the quick coming of the tempest, and the first premonitory drops began to plash down heavily upon the pavement. Still I ran on, thinking that I should find a cab in the Place de la Madeleine; but the Place de la Madeleine was empty. Even the café at the corner was closed. Even the omnibus office was shut up, and the red lamp above the door extinguished.

What was I to do now? Panting and breathless, I leaned up against a doorway, and resigned myself to fate. Stay, what was that file of carriages, dimly seen through the rain which was now coming down in earnest? It was in a private street opening off at the back of the Madeleine—a street in which I could remember no public stand. Perhaps

there was an evening party at one of the large houses lower down, and, if so, I might surely find a not wholly incorruptible cabman, who would consent for a liberal *pourboire* to drive me home and keep his fare waiting, if need were, for one little half hour! At all events it was worth trying for; so away I darted again, with the wind whistling about my ears, and the rain driving in my face.

But my troubles were not to be so speedily ended. Among the ten or fifteen equipages which I found drawn up in file, there was not one hackney vehicle. They were private carriages, and all, therefore, inaccessible.

Did I say inaccessible?

A bold idea occurred to me. The rain was so heavy that it could scarcely be expected to last many minutes. The carriage at the very end of the line was not likely to be the first called; and, even if it were, one could spring out in a moment, if necessary. In short, the very daring of the deed was as attractive as the shelter! I made my way swiftly down the line. The last carriage

was a neat little brougham, and the coachman, with his hat pulled down over his eyes, and his collar drawn up about his ears, was too much absorbed in taking care of himself and his horses to pay much attention to a foot-passenger. I passed boldly by—doubled back stealthily on my own steps—looked round cautiously—opened the door, and glided in.

It was a delightfully comfortable little vehicle—cushioned, soft, yielding, and pervaded by a delicate perfume of eglantine. Wondering who the owner might be—if she was young—if she was pretty—if she was married, or single, or a widow—I settled myself in the darkest corner of the carriage, intending only to remain there till the rain had abated. Thus I fell, as fate would have it—first into a profound reverie, and then into a still profounder sleep. How long this sleep may have lasted I know not. I only remember becoming slowly conscious of a gentle movement, which, without awaking, partly roused me; of a check to that movement, which brought my thoughts sud-

denly to the surface ; of a stream of light—of an open door—a crowded hall—a lady waiting to come out, and a little crowd of attentive beaux surrounding her !

I comprehended my position in an instant, and the impossibility of extricating myself from it. To get out next the house was to brave detection ; whilst at the other side I found myself blocked in by carriages. Escape was now hopeless ! I turned hot and cold ; I shrank back ; I would have gone through the bottom of the carriage, if I could. At this moment, to my horror, the footman opened the door. I gave myself up for lost, and, in a sudden access of desperation, was on the point of rushing out, *coûte que coûte*, when the lady ran forward ; sprang lightly in ; recoiled ; and uttered a little breathless cry of surprise and apprehension !

“ *Mon Dieu, Madame !* what is it ? Are you hurt ? ” cried two or three of the gentlemen, running out, bareheaded, to her assistance.

But to my amazement, she unfastened her

cloak, and threw it over me in such a manner as to leave me completely hidden beneath the folds.

“ Oh, nothing, thank you !—I only caught my foot in my cloak. I am really quite ashamed to have alarmed you ! A thousand thanks—good night.”

And so, with something of a slight tremor in her voice, the lady drew up the window. The next instant the carriage moved on.

And now, what was to be done ? I blessed the accident which rendered me invisible ; but at the same time asked myself how it was to end.

Should I wait till she reached her own door, and then, still feigning sleep, allow myself to be discovered ? Or should I take the bull by the horns, and reveal myself ? If the latter, would she scream, or faint, or go into hysterics ? Then, again, supposing she resumed her cloak a cold damp broke out upon my forehead at the mere thought ! All at once, just as these questions flashed across my mind, the lady drew the mantle aside, and said :—

“How imprudent of you to hide in my carriage!”

I could not believe my ears.

“Suppose any of those people had caught sight of you . . . why, it would have been all over Paris to-morrow! Happily, I had the presence of mind to cover you with my cloak; otherwise . . . but there, Monsieur, I have a great mind to be very angry with you!”

It was now clear that I was mistaken for some one else. Fortunately the carriage lamps were unlit, the windows still blurred with rain, and the night intensely dark; so, feeling like a wretch reprieved on the scaffold, I shrank farther and farther into the corner, glad to favour a mistake which promised some hope of escape.

“*Eh bien!*” said the lady, half tenderly, half reproachfully; “have you nothing to say to me?”

Say to her, indeed! What could I say to her? Would not my voice betray me directly?

“Ah,” she continued, without waiting for

a reply ; “ you are ashamed of the cruel scene of this morning ! Well, since you have not allowed the night to pass without seeking a reconciliation, I suppose I must forgive you ! ”

I thought, at this point, that I could not do better than press her hand, which was exquisitely soft and small—softer and smaller than even Madame de Marignan’s.

“ Naughty Hippolyte ! ” murmured my companion. “ Confess, now, that you were unreasonable ! ”

I sighed heavily, and caressed the little hand with both of mine.

“ And are you very penitent ? ”

I expressed my penitence by another prodigious sigh, and ventured, this time, to kiss the tips of the dainty fingers.

“ *Ciel !* ” exclaimed the lady. “ You have shaved off your beard ! What can have induced you to do such a thing ? ”

My beard, indeed ! Alas ! I would have given any money for even a moustache ! However, the fatal moment was come when I must speak.

“*Mon cher ange*,” I began, trying a hoarse whisper, “I—I—the fact is—a bet——”

“A bet indeed! The idea of sacrificing such a handsome beard for a mere bet! I never heard of anything so foolish. But how hoarse you are, Hippolyte!”

“All within the last hour,” whispered I. “I was caught in the storm, just now, and”

“And have taken cold, for my sake! Alas! my poor, dear friend, why did you wait to speak to me? Why did you not go home at once, and change your clothes? Your sleeve, I declare, is still quite damp! Hippolyte, if you fall ill, I shall never forgive myself!”

I kissed her hand again. It was much pleasanter than whispering, and expressed all that was necessary.

“But you have not once asked after poor Bibi!” exclaimed my companion, after a momentary silence. “Poor, dear Bibi, who has been suffering from a martyrdom with her cough all the afternoon!”

Now, who the deuce was Bibi? She might

be a baby. Or—who could tell?—she might be a poodle! On this point, however, I was left uninformed; for my unknown friend, who, luckily, seemed fond of talking and had a great deal to say, launched off into another topic immediately.

“After all,” said she, “I should have been wrong not to go to the party! My uncle was evidently pleased with my compliance; and it is not wise to vex one’s rich uncles, if one can help it—is it, Hippolyte?”

I pressed her hand again.

“Besides, Monsieur Delaroche was not there. He was not even invited; so you see how far they were from laying match-making plots, and how groundless were all your fears and reproaches!”

Monsieur Delaroche! Could this be the Delaroche of my special aversion? I pressed her hand again, more closely, more tenderly, and listened for what might come next.

“Well, it is all over now! And will you promise *never, never, never* to be jealous again? Then, to be jealous of such a creature as that ridiculous Delaroche—a man

who knows nothing—who can think and talk only of his own absurd self!—a man who has not even wit enough to see that every one laughs at him!”

I was delighted. I longed to embrace her on the spot! Was there ever such a charming, sensible, lively creature?

“Besides, the coxcomb is just now devoting himself, body and soul (such as they are!) to that insufferable little *intriguante*, Madame de Marignan. He is to be seen with her in every drawing-room and theatre throughout Paris. For my part, I am amazed that a woman of the world should suffer herself to be compromised to that extent—especially one so experienced in these *affaires du cœur*.”

Madame de Marignan! Compromised—experienced—*intriguante*! I felt as if I were choking.

“To be sure, there is that poor English lad whom she drags about with her, to play propriety,” continued she; “but do you suppose the world is blinded by so shallow an artifice?”

“What English lad?” I asked, startled out of all sense of precaution, and desperately resolved to know the worst.

“What English lad? Why, Hippolyte, you are more stupid than ever! I pointed him out to you the other night at the Comedie Française—a pale, handsome boy, of about nineteen or twenty, with brown curling hair, and very fine eyes which were rivetted on Madame de Marignan the whole evening. Poor fellow! I cannot help pitying him.”

“Then—then, you think she really does not love him?” I said. And this time my voice was hoarse enough, without any need of feigning.

“Love him? Ridiculous! What does such a woman understand by love? Certainly neither the sentiment nor the poetry of it! Tush, Hippolyte! I do not wish to be censorious; but everyone knows that ever since M. de Marignan has been away in Algiers, that woman has had, not one devoted admirer, but a dozen; and now that her husband is coming back”

“Coming back! her husband!” I

echoed, half rising in my place, and falling back again, as if stunned. "Good heavens! is she not a widow?"

It was now the lady's turn to be startled.

"A widow!" she repeated. "Why, you know as well as I that——*Dieu!* To whom am I speaking?"

"Madame," I said, as steadily as my agitation would let me, "I beg you not to be alarmed. I am not, it is true, the person whom you have supposed; but—Nay, I implore you"

She here uttered a quick cry, and darted forward for the check-string. Arresting her hand half way, respectfully but firmly, I went on:—

"How I came here, I will explain presently. I am a gentleman; and upon the word of a gentleman, Madame, am innocent of any desire to offend or alarm you. Can you—will you—hear me for one moment?"

"I appear, sir, to have no alternative," replied she, trembling like a caged bird.

"I might have left you undeceived, Madame. I might have extricated myself from

this painful position undiscovered—but for some words which just escaped your lips ; some words so nearly concerning the—the honour and happiness of—of in short, I lost my presence of mind. I now implore you to tell me if all that you have just been saying of Madame de Marignan is strictly true.”

“Who are you, sir, that you should dare to surprise confidences intended for another, and by what right do you question me?” said the lady, haughtily.

“By no right, Madame,” I replied, fairly breaking into sobs, and burying my face in my hands. “I can only appeal to your compassion. I am that Englishman whom—whom”

For a moment there was silence. My companion was the first to speak.

“Poor boy !” she said ; and her voice, now, was gentle and compassionate. “You have been rudely undeceived. Did Madame de Marignan pass herself off upon you for a widow ?”

“She never named her husband to me—

I believed that she was free. I fancied he had been dead for years. She knew that was my impression."

"And you would have married her—actually married her?"

"I—I hardly dared to hope"

"*Ciel!* it is almost beyond belief. And you never inquired into her past history?"

"Never. Why should I?"

"Monsieur de Marignan holds a government appointment in Algiers, and has been absent more than four years. He is, I understand, expected back shortly, on leave of absence."

I conquered my agitation by a supreme effort.

"Madame," I said, "I thank you. It now only remains for me to explain my intrusion. I can do so in half a dozen words. Caught in the storm and unable to find a conveyance, I sought shelter in this carriage, which being the last on the file, offered the only refuge of which I could avail myself unobserved. While waiting for the tempest to abate, I fell asleep; and but for the chance

which led you to mistake me for another, I must have been discovered when you entered the carriage."

"Then, finding yourself so mistaken, Monsieur, would it not have been more honourable to undeceive me than to usurp a conversation which . . ."

"Madame, I dared not. I feared to alarm you—I hoped to find some means of escape, and"

"*Mon Dieu!* what means? How are you to escape as it is? How leave the carriage without being seen by my servants?"

I had not thought of this, nor of the dilemma in which my presence must place her.

"I can open the door softly," said I, "and jump out unperceived."

"Impossible, at the pace we are going! You would break your neck."

I shook my head, and laughed bitterly.

"Have no fear of that, Madame," I said. "Those who least value their necks never happen to break them. See, I can spring out as we pass the next turning, and be out of sight in a moment."

“Indeed, I will not permit it. Oh, dear! we have already reached the Faubourg St. Germain. Stay—I have an idea! Do you know what o’clock it is?”

“I don’t know how long I may have slept; but I think it must be quite three.”

“*Bien!* The Countess de Blois has a ball to-night, and her visitors are sure not to disperse before four or five. My sister is there. I will send in to ask if she has yet gone home, and when the carriage stops you can slip out. Here is the Rue de Bac, and the door of her hotel is yet surrounded with equipages.”

And with this, she let down a front window, desired the coachman to stop, leaned forward so as to hide me completely, and sent in her footman with the message. When the man had fairly entered the hall, she turned to me and said:—

“Now, Monsieur, fly! It is your only chance.”

“I go, Madame; but before going, suffer me to assure you that I know neither your name, nor that of the person for whom you

mistake me—that I have no idea of your place of residence—that I should not know you, if I saw you again to-morrow—in short, that you are to me as entirely a stranger as if this adventure had never happened.”

“Monsieur, I thank you for the assurance; but I see the servant returning. Pray, begone!”

I sprang out without another word, and, never once looking back, darted down a neighbouring street and waited in the shadow of a doorway till I thought the carriage must be out of sight.

The night was now fine, the moon was up, and the sky was full of stars. But I heeded nothing, save my own perplexed and painful thoughts. Absorbed in these, I followed the course of the Rue du Bac till I came to the Pont National. There my steps were arrested by the sight of the eddying river, the long gleaming front of the Louvre, the quaint, glistening gables of the Tuileries, the far-reaching trees of the Champs Elysées all silvered in the soft, uncertain moonlight. It was a most

calm and beautiful picture ; and I stood for a long time leaning against the parapet of the bridge, and looking dreamily at the scene before me. Then I heard the quarters chime from belfry to belfry all over the quiet city, and found that it was half-past three o'clock. Presently a patrol of *gendarmes* went by, and, finding that they paused and looked at me suspiciously, I turned away, and bent my steps homewards.

By the time I reached the Cité Bergère it was past four, and the early market-carts were already rumbling along the Rue du Faubourg Montmartre. Going up wearily to my apartments, I found a note waiting for me in Dalrymple's hand-writing. It ran thus :—

“MY DEAR DAMON,

“Do you know that it is nearly a month since I last saw you? Do you know that I have called twice at your lodgings without finding you at home? I hear of you as having been constantly seen, of late, in the society of a very pretty woman

of our acquaintance ; but I confess that I do not desire to see you go to the devil entirely without the friendly assistance of

“ Yours faithfully,

“ OSCAR DALRYMPLE.”

I read the note twice. I could scarcely believe that I had so neglected my only friend. Had I been mad ? Or a fool ?—or both ? Too anxious and unhappy to sleep, and too tired to sit up, I lit my lamp, threw myself upon the bed, and there lay repenting my wasted hours, my misplaced love and my egregious folly, till morning came with its sunshine and its traffic, and found me “ a wiser,” if not a “ better man.”

“ Half-past seven !” exclaimed I to myself, as I jumped up and plunged my head into a basin of cold water. “ Dr. Chéron shall see me before nine this morning. I’ll call on Dalrymple at luncheon time ; at three, I must get back for the afternoon lecture ; and in the evening—in the evening, by Jove ! Madame de Marignan must be content with her adorable Delaroche, for the


deuce a bit of her humble servant will she ever see again !”

And away I went presently along the sunny streets, humming to myself those saucy and wholesome lines of good Sir Walter Raleigh’s :—

“ Shall I like a hermit dwell,
On a rock, or in a cell,
Calling home the smallest part
That is missing of my heart,
To bestow it where I may,
Meet a rival every day ?
If she undervalues me,
What care I how fair she be ?”

CHAPTER XVII.

The Widow of a Minister of Finance.

“OU are just in time, Arbuthnot, to do me a service,” said Dalrymple, looking up from his desk as I went in and reaching out his hand to me over a barricade of books and papers.

“Then I am very glad I have come,” I replied. “But what confusion is this? Are you going anywhere?”

“Yes—to perdition. There, kick that rubbish out of your way, and sit down.”

Never very orderly, Dalrymple’s rooms were this time in as terrible a litter as can well be conceived. The table was piled high with bills, old letters, books, cigars, gloves, card-cases, and pamphlets. The carpet was strewn with portmanteaus, hat-cases,

travelling straps, old luggage labels, railway wrappers, and the like. The chairs and sofas were laden with wearing apparel. As for Dalrymple himself, he looked haggard and weary, as though the last four weeks had laid four years upon his shoulders.

“You look ill,” I said, clearing a corner of the sofa for my own accommodation; “or *ennuyé*, which is much the same thing. What is the matter? And what can I do for you?”

“The matter is that I am going abroad,” said he, with his chin resting moodily in his two palms and his elbows on the table.

“Going abroad! Where?”

“I don’t know—

‘Anywhere, anywhere, out of the world!’

It’s of very little consequence whether I betake myself to the East or to the West; eat rice in the tropics, or drink train-oil at the Pole.”

“But have you no settled projects?”

“None whatever.”

“And don’t care what becomes of you?”

“Not in the least.”

“Then, in heaven’s name, what has happened?”

“The very thing that, three weeks ago, would have made me the happiest fellow in Christendom. What are you going to do to-morrow?”

“Nothing, beyond my ordinary routine of medical study.”

“Humph! Could you get a whole holiday, for once?”

I remembered how many I had taken of late, and felt ashamed of the readiness with which I replied:—

“Oh, yes! easily.”

“Well, then, I want you to spend the day with me. It will be, perhaps, my last in Paris for many a month, or even many a year. I Pshaw! I may as well say it, and have done with it. I am going to be married.”

“Married!” I exclaimed, in blank amazement; for it was the last thing I should have guessed.

Dalrymple tugged away at his moustache with both hands, as was his habit when perplexed or troubled, and nodded gloomily.

“To whom?”

“To Madame de Courcelles.”

“And are you not very happy?”

“Happy! I am the most miserable dog unchanged.”

I was more at fault now than ever.

“I judging from trifles which some would perhaps scarcely have observed,” I said hesitatingly, “I—I thought you were interested in Madame de Courcelles.”

“Interested!” cried he, pushing back his chair and springing to his feet, as if the word had stung him. “By heaven! I love that woman as I never loved in my life.”

“Then why”

“I’ll tell you why—or, at least, I will tell you as much as I may—as I can; for the affair is hers, and not mine. She has a cousin—curse him!—to whom she was betrothed from childhood. His estates adjoined hers; family interests were concerned in their union; and the parents on both sides arranged matters. When, however, Monsieur de Courcelles fell in love with her—a

man much older than herself, but possessed of great wealth and immense political influence—her father did not hesitate to send the cousin to the deuce and marry his daughter to the Minister of Finance. The cousin it seems, was then a wild, young fellow ; not particularly in love with her himself ; and not at all inconsolable for her loss. When, however, Monsieur de Courcelles was good enough to die (which he had the bad taste to do very hastily, and without making by any means the splendid provision for his widow which he had promised) our friend the cousin comes forward again. By this time he is enough man of the world to appreciate the value of land—more especially as he has sold, mortgaged, played the mischief with nearly every acre of his own. He pleads the old engagement, and, as he is pleased to call it, the old love. Madame de Courcelles is a young widow, very solitary, with no one to love, no object to live for, and no experience of the world. Her pity is easily awaked ; and the result is that she not only accepts the cousin, but lends him large sums

of money ; suffers the title-deeds of her estates to go into the hands of his lawyer ; and is formally betrothed to him before the eyes of all Paris !”

“ Who is this man ? Where is he ?” I asked, eagerly.

“ He is an officer of Chasseurs, now serving with his regiment in Algiers—a daring, dashing, reckless fellow ; heartless and dissipated enough ; but a splendid soldier. However,—having committed her property to his hands, and suffered her name to be associated publicly with his, Madame de Courcelles, during his absence in Algiers, has done me the honour to prefer me. I have the first real love of her life, and the short and long of it is, that we are to be privately married to-morrow.”

“ And why privately ?”

“ Ah, there’s the pity of it ! There’s the disappointment and the bitterness !”

“ Can’t Madame de Courcelles write and tell this man that she loves somebody else better ?”

“ Confound it ! no. The fellow has her too

much in his power, and, if he chose to be dishonest, could half ruin her. At all events she is afraid of him; and I . . . I am as helpless as a child in the matter. If I were a rich man, I would snap my fingers at him; but how can I, with a paltry eight hundred a year, provide for that woman? Pshaw! If I could but settle it with a pair of hair-triggers and twenty paces of turf, I'd leave little work for the lawyers!"

"Well, then, what is to be done?"

"Only this," replied he, striding impatiently to and fro, like a caged lion; "I must just bear with my helplessness, and leave the remedy to those who can oppose skill to skill, and lawyer to lawyer."

"At all events, you marry the lady."

"Ay—I marry the lady; but I start to-morrow night for Berlin, *en route* for anywhere that chance may lead me!"

"Without her?"

"Without her. Do you suppose that I would stay in Paris—I, her husband—and live apart from her? Meet her, like an ordinary acquaintance? See others admiring

her? Be content to lounge in and out of her *soirées*, or ride beside her carriage now and then, as you or fifty others might do? Perhaps, have even to endure the presence of De Caylus himself? *Merci!* Any number of miles, whether of land or sea, were better than a martyrdom like that!"

"De Caylus!" I repeated. "Where have I heard that name?"

"You may have heard of it in a hundred places," replied my friend. "As I said before, the man is a gallant soldier, and does gallant things. But to return to the present question—may I depend on you to-morrow? For we must have a witness, and our witness must be both discreet and silent."

"On my silence and discretion you may rely absolutely."

"And you can be here by nine?"

"By daybreak, if you please."

"I won't tax you to that extent. Nine will do quite well."

"Adieu, then, till nine."

"Adieu, and thank you."


With this I left him, somewhat relieved to find that I had escaped all cross-examination on the score of Madame Marignan.

“De Caylus!” I again repeated to myself, as I took my rapid way to the Hôtel Dieu. “De Caylus! why, surely, it must have been that evening at Madame de Courcelles’”

And then I recollected that De Caylus was the name of that officer who was said to have ridden by night, and single-handed, through the heart of the enemy’s camp, somewhere in Algiers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Marriage not "à la Mode."

HE marriage took place in a little out-of-the-way Protestant chapel beyond the barriers, at about a quarter before ten o'clock the next morning. Dalrymple and I were there first ; and Madame de Courcelles, having, in order to avoid observation, come part of the distance in a cab and part on foot, arrived a few minutes later. She was very pale, and looked almost like a *religieuse*, with her black veil tied closely under her chin, and a dark violet dress, which might have passed for mourning. She gave her hand to Dalrymple without speaking ; then knelt down at the communion-table, and so remained

till we had all taken our places. As for Dalrymple, he had even less colour than she, but held his head up haughtily, and betrayed no sign of the conflict within.

It was a melancholy little chapel, dusty and neglected, full of black and white funereal tablets, and damp as a vault. We shivered as we stood about the altar; the clergyman's teeth chattered as he began the marriage service; and the echoes of our responses reverberated forlornly up among the gothic rafters overhead. Even the sunbeams struggled sadly and palely down the upper windows, and the chill wind whistled in when the door was opened, bringing with it a moan of coming rain.

The ceremony over, the books signed in the vestry, and the clergyman, clerk, and pew-opener duly remunerated for their services, we prepared to be gone. For a couple of moments, Dalrymple and his bride stood apart in the shadow of the porch. I saw him take the hand on which he had just placed the ring, and look down upon it tenderly, wistfully—I saw him bend lower, and

lower, whispering what no other ears might hear—I saw their lips meet for one brief instant. Then the lady's veil was lowered; she turned hastily away; and Dalrymple was left standing in the doorway alone.

"By heaven!" said he, grasping my hand as though he would crush it. "This is hard to bear."

I but returned the pressure of his hand; for I knew not with what words to comfort him. Thus we lingered for some minutes in silence, till the clergyman, having put off his surplice, passed us with a bow and went out; and the pew-opener, after pretending to polish the door-handle with her apron, and otherwise waiting about with an air of fidgetty politeness, dropped a civil curtsy, and begged to remind us that the chapel must now be closed.

Dalrymple started and shook himself like a water-dog, as if he would so shake off "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

"*Rex est qui metuit nihil!*" said he; "but I am a sovereign in bad circumstances, for all that. Heigho! Care will kill a cat."

What shall we do with ourselves, old fellow, for the rest of the day?"

"I hardly know. Would you like to go into the country?"

"Nothing better. The air perhaps would exorcise some of these blue-devils."

"What say you to St. Germain's? It looks as if it must rain before night; yet there is the forest, and . . ."

"Excellent! We can do as we like, with nobody to stare at us; and I am in a horribly uncivilised frame of mind this morning."

With this, we turned once more towards Paris and, jumping into the first cab that came by, were driven to the station. It happened that a train was then about to start; so we were off immediately.

There were no other passengers in the carriage, so Dalrymple infringed the company's mandate by lighting a cigar, and I, finding him disinclined for talk, did the same thing, and watched the passing country. Flat and uninteresting at first, it consisted of a mere sandy plain, treeless, hedge-

less, and imperfectly cultivated with straggling strips of corn and vegetables. By and by came a line of stunted pollards, a hamlet, and a little dreary cemetery. Then the landscape improved. The straight line of the horizon broke into gentle undulations; the Seine, studded with islets, wound through the meadow-land at our feet; and a lofty viaduct carried us from height to height across the eddying river. Then we passed into the close green shade of a forest, which opened every here and there into long vistas, yielding glimpses of

“—verdurous glooms, and winding mossy ways.”

Through this wood the line continued to run till we reached our destination. Here our first few steps brought us out upon the Place, directly facing the old red and black chateau of St. Germain-en-Laye. Leaving this and the little dull town behind us, we loitered for some time about the broad walks of the park, and then passed on into the forest. Although it was neither Sunday nor a fête-day, there were pleasure parties

gipseying under trees—Parisian cockneys riding raw-boned steeds—pony-chaises full of laughing grisettes dashing up and down the broad roads that pierce the wood in various directions—old women selling cakes and lemonade—workmen gambling with half-pence on the smooth turf by the wayside—*bonnes*, comely and important, with their little charges playing round them, and their busy fingers plying the knitting-needles as they walked—young ladies sketching trees, and prudent governesses reading novels close by; in short, all the life and variety of a favourite suburban resort on an ordinarily fine day about the beginning of autumn.

Leaving the frequented routes to the right, we turned into one of the many hundred tracks that diverge in every direction from the beaten roads, and wandered deeper and deeper into the green shades and solitudes of the forest. Pausing, presently, to rest, Dalrymple threw himself at full length on the mossy ground, with his hands clasping the back of his head, and his hat over his

eyes : whilst I found a luxurious arm-chair in the gnarled roots of a lichen-tufted elm. Thus we remained for a considerable time puffing away at our cigars in that sociable silence which may almost claim to be an unique privilege of masculine friendship. Women cannot sit together for long without talking : men can enjoy each other's companionship for hours with scarcely the interchange of an idea.

Meanwhile, I watched the squirrels up in the beech-trees and the dancing of the green leaves against the sky ; and thought dreamily of home, of my father, of the far past, and the possible future. I asked myself how, when my term of study came to an end, I should ever again endure the old home-life at Saxonholme ? How settle down for life as my father's partner, conforming myself to his prejudices, obeying all the demands of his imperious temper, and accepting for evermore the monotonous routine of a provincial practice ? It was an intolerable prospect, but no less inevitable than intolerable. Pondering thus, I sighed

heavily, and the sigh roused Dalrymple's attention.

"Why, Damon," said he, turning over on his elbow, and pushing up his hat to the level of his eyes, "what's the matter with you?"

"Oh, nothing—at least, nothing new."

"Well, new or old, what is it? A man must be either in debt, or in love, when he sighs in that way. You look as melancholy as Werter redivivus!"

"I—I ought not to be melancholy, I suppose; for I was thinking of home."

Dalrymple's face and voice softened immediately.

"Poor boy!" he said, throwing away the end of his cigar, "yours is not a bright home, I fear. You told me, I think, that you had lost your mother?"

"From infancy."

"And you have no sisters?"

"None. I am an only child."

"Your father, however, is living?"

"Yes, my father lives. He is a rough-tempered, eccentric man; misanthropic, but

clever; kind enough, and generous enough, in his own strange way. Still——"

"Still, what?"

—"I dread the life that lies before me! I dread the life without society, without ambition, without change—the dull house—the bounded sphere of action—the bondage . . . But of what use is it to trouble you with these things?"

"This use, that it does you good to tell, and me to listen. Sympathy, like mercy, blesseth him that gives and him that takes; and if I cannot actually help you, I am, at all events, thankful to be taken out of myself. Go on—tell me more of your prospects. Have you no acquaintances at Saxonholme whose society will make the place pleasant to you? No boyish friends? No pretty cousins? No first-loves, from amongst whom to choose a wife in time to come?"

I shook my head sadly.

"Did I not tell you that my father was a misanthrope? He visits no one, unless professionally. We have no friends and no relations."

“Humph! that’s awkward. However, it leaves you free to choose your own friends, when you go back. A medical man need never be without a visiting connection. His very profession puts a thousand opportunities in his way.”

“That is true; but——”

“But what?”

“I am not fond of the profession. I have never liked it. I would give much to relinquish it altogether.”

Dalrymple gave utterance to a prolonged and very dismal whistle.

“This,” said he gravely, “is the most serious part of the business. To live in a dull place is bad enough—to live with dull people is bad enough; but to have one’s thoughts perpetually occupied with an uncongenial subject, and one’s energies devoted to an uncongenial pursuit, is just misery, and nothing short of it! In fact ’tis a moral injustice, and one that no man should be required to endure.”

“Yet I must endure it.”

“Why?”

"Because it is too late to do otherwise."

"It is never too late to repair an evil, or an error."

"Unless the repairing of it involved a worse evil, or a more fatal error! No—I must not dream now of turning aside from the path that has been chosen for me. Too much time and too much money have been given to the thing for that;—I must let it take its course. There's no help for it!"

"But, confound it, lad! you'd better follow the fife and drum, or go before the mast, than give up your life to a profession you hate!"

"Hate is a strong word," I replied. "I do not actually hate it—at all events I must try to make the best of it, if only for my father's sake. His heart is set on making a physician of me, and I dare not disappoint him."

Dalrymple looked at me fixedly, and then fell back into his old position.

"Heigho!" he said, pulling his hat once more over his eyes, "I was a disobedient son. My father intended me for the Church; I was

expelled from College for fighting a duel before I was twenty, and then, sooner than go home disgraced, enlisted as a private soldier in a cavalry corps bound for foreign service. Luckily, they found me out before the ship sailed, and made the best of a bad bargain by purchasing me a cornetcy in a dragoon regiment. I would not advise you to be disobedient, Damon. My experience in that line has been bitter enough."

"How so? You escaped a profession for which you were disinclined, and entered one for which you had every qualification."

"Ay; but think of the cursed *esclandre*—first the duel, then the expulsion, then my disappearance for two months . . . My mother was in bad health at the time, too; and I, her favourite son—I—in short, the anxiety was too much for her. She—she died before I had been six weeks in the regiment. There! we wont talk of it. It's the one subject that . . ."

His voice faltered, and he broke off abruptly.

"I wish you were going with me to

Berlin," said he, after a long silence which I had not attempted to interrupt.

"I wish with all my heart that I were!"

"And yet," he added, "I am glad on—on her account, that you remain in Paris. You will call upon her sometimes, Arbuthnot?"

"If Madame De Cour I mean, if Mrs. Dalrymple will permit me."

An involuntary smile flitted across his lips—the first I had seen there all the day.

"She will be glad—grateful. She knows that I value you, and she has proof that I trust you. You are the only possessor of our secret."

"It is as safe with me," I said, "as if I were dead, and in my grave."

"I know it, old fellow. Well—you will see her sometimes. You will write to me, and tell me how she is looking. If—if she were to fall ill, you would not conceal it from me? and in case of any emergency—any annoyance arising from De Caylus . . ."

"Were she my own sister," I said, earnestly, "she would not find me readier to

assist or defend her. Of this, Dalrymple, be assured."

"Thank you," he said, and stretched up his hand to me. "I do believe you are true—though there are few men, and still fewer women, of whom I should like to say as much. By the way, Arbuthnot, beware of that little flirt, Madame de Marignan. She has charming eyes, but no more heart than a vampire. Besides, an entanglement with a married woman! . . . *cela ne se peut pas, mon cher*. You are too young to venture on such dangerous ground, and too inexperienced."

I smiled—perhaps somewhat bitterly—for the wound was still fresh, and I could not help wincing when any hand came near it.

"You are right," I replied. "Madame de Marignan is a dangerous woman; but dangerous for me no longer. However, I have paid rather dearly for my safety."

And with this, I told him the whole story from beginning to end, confessing all my follies without reservation. Surprised,

amused, sometimes unable to repress a smile, sometimes genuinely compassionate, he heard my narrative through, accompanying it from time to time with muttered comments and ejaculations, none of which were very flattering to Madame de Marignan. When I had done, he sprang to his feet, laid his hand heavily upon my shoulder, and said :—

“Damon, there are a great many disagreeable things in life which wise people say are good for us, and for which they tell us we ought to be grateful in proportion to our discomfort. For my own part, however, I am no optimist. I am not fond of mortifying the flesh, and the eloquence of Socrates would fail to persuade me that a carbuncle was a cheerful companion, or the gout an ailment to be ardently desired. Yet, for all this, I cannot say that I look upon your adventure in the light of a misfortune. You have lost time, spent money, and endured a considerable amount of aggravation ; but you have, on the other hand, acquired ease of manner, facility of conver-

sation, and just that necessary polish which fits a man for society. Come ! you have received a valuable lesson both in morals and manners ; so farewell to Madame de Marignan, and let us write *Pour acquit* against the score !”

Willing enough to accept this cheerful view, I flourished an imaginary autograph upon the air with the end of my cane, and laughingly dismissed the subject.

We then strolled back through the wood, treading the soft moss under our feet, startling the brown lizards from our path and the squirrels from the lower branches of the great trees, and, now and then, surprising a plump little green frog, which went skipping away into the long grass, like an animated emerald. Coming back to the gardens, we next lingered for some time upon the terrace, admiring the superb panorama of undulating woodland and cultivated champagne, which, seen through the golden haze of afternoon, stretched out in glory to the remotest horizon. To our right stood the

prison-like chateau, flinging back the sunset from its innumerable casements, and seeming to drink in the warm glow at every pore of its old, red bricks. To our left, all lighted up against the sky, rose the lofty tree-tops of the forest which we had just quitted. Our shadows stretched behind us across the level terrace, like the shadows of giants. Involuntarily, we dropped our voices. It would have seemed almost like profanity to speak aloud while the first influence of that scene was upon us.

Going on presently towards the verge of the terrace, we came upon an artist who, with his camp stool under his arm, and his portfolio at his feet, was, like ourselves, taking a last look at the sunset before going away. As we approached, he turned and recognised us. It was Herr Franz Müller, the story-telling student of the *Chicards* club.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," said he, lifting his red cap, and letting it fall back again a little on one side. "We do not see many such sunsets in the course of the summer."

“Indeed, no,” replied Dalrymple; “and ere long the autumn tints will be creeping over the landscape, and the whole scene will assume a different character. Have you been sketching in the forest?”

“No—I have been making a study of the chateau and terrace from this point, with the landscape beyond. It is for an historical subject which I have laid out for my winter’s work.”

And with this, he good-naturedly opened his folio and took out the sketch, which was a tolerably large one, and represented the scene under much the same conditions of light as we now saw it.

“I shall have a group of figures here,” he said, pointing to a spot on the terrace, “and a more distant one there; with a sprinkling of dogs and, perhaps, a head or two at an open window of the chateau. I shall also add a flag flying on the turret, yonder.”

“A scene, I suppose, from the life of Louis the Thirteenth,” I suggested.

“No—I mean it for the exiled court of James the Second,” replied he. “And I

shall bring in the King, and Mary of Modena, and the Prince their son, who was afterwards the Pretender."

"It is a good subject," said Dalrymple. "You will of course find excellent portraits of all these people at Versailles; and a lively description of their court, mode of life, and so forth, if my memory serves me correctly, in the tales of Anthony, Count Hamilton. But with all this, I dare say, you are better acquainted than I."

"*Parbleu!* not I," said the student, shouldering his camp-stool as if it were a musket, and slinging his portfolio by a strap across his back; "therefore, I am all the more obliged to you for the information. My reading is neither very extensive, nor very useful; and as for my library, I could pack it all into a hat-case any day, and find room for a few other trifles at the same time. Here is the author I chiefly study. He is my constant companion, and, like myself, looks somewhat the worse for wear."

Saying which, he produced from one of

his pockets a little, greasy, dog-eared volume of Beranger, about the size of a small snuff-box, and began singing aloud, to a very cheerful air, a song of which a certain faithless Mademoiselle Lisette was the heroine, and of which the refrain was always:—

*“Lisette ! ma Lisette.
Tu m’as trompé toujours ;
Je veux, Lisette,
Boire à nos amours.”*

To this accompaniment we walked back through the gardens to the railway station, where, being a quarter of an hour too soon, our companion amused himself by “chaffing,” questioning, contradicting, and otherwise ingeniously tormenting the check-takers and porters of the establishment. One pompous official, in particular, became so helplessly indignant that he retired into a little office overlooking the platform, and was heard to swear fluently, all by himself, for several minutes. The time having expired and the doors being opened, we passed out with the rest of the home-going Parisians, and were about to take our places, when Müller, climbing like

a cat to the roof-seats on the top of the second-class carriages, beckoned us to follow.

"Who would be shut up with ten fat people and a baby, when fresh air can be breathed, and tobacco smoked, for precisely the same fare?" asked he. "You don't mean to say that you came down to St. Germain in one of the dens below?"

"Yes, we did," I replied; "but we had it to ourselves."

"So much the worse. Man is a gregarious animal, and woman also—which proves Zimmerman to have been neither, and accounts for the brotherhood of *Les Chicards*. Would you like to see how that old gentleman looks when he is angry?"

"Which? The one in the opposite corner?"

"The same."

"Well, that depends on circumstances. Why do you ask?"

"Because I'll engage to satisfy your curiosity in less than ten minutes."

"Oh, no, don't affront him," said I. "We shall only have a scene."

“I won’t affront him. I promise not to utter a syllable, either offensive or defensive.”

“Leave him alone, then, poor devil!”

“Nonsense! If he chooses to be annoyed, that’s his business, and not mine. Now, you’ll see.”

And Müller, alert for mischief, stared fixedly at the old gentleman in the opposite corner for some minutes—then sighed—roused himself as if from a profound reverie—seized his portfolio—took out a pencil and sketch-book—mended the pencil with an elaborate show of fastidiousness and deliberation—stared again—drew a deep breath—turned somewhat aside, as if anxious to conceal his object, and began sketching rapidly. Now and then he paused; stole a furtive glance over his shoulder; bit his lip; rubbed out; corrected; glanced again; and then went on rapidly as before.

In the meanwhile the old gentleman, who was somewhat red and irascible, began to get seriously uncomfortable. He frowned, fidgetted, coughed, buttoned and unbuttoned his coat, and jealously watched every

proceeding of his tormentor. A general smile dawned upon the faces of the rest of the travellers. The priest over the way pinched his lips together, and looked down demurely. The two girls, next to the priest, tittered behind their handkerchiefs. The young man with the blue cravat sucked the top of his cane, and winked openly at his companions, both of whom were cracking nuts, and flinging the shells down the embankment. Presently Müller threw his head back; held the drawing off, still studiously keeping the back of it towards the rest of the passengers; looked at it with half-closed eyes; stole another exceedingly cautious glance at his victim; and then, affecting for the first time to find himself observed, made a vast show of pretending to sketch the country through which we were passing.

The old gentleman could stand it no longer.

"Monsieur," said he, angrily, "Monsieur, I will thank you not to take my portrait. I object to it, Monsieur."

"Charming distance," said Müller, ad-

dressing himself to me. "Wants interest, however, in the foreground. That's a picturesque tree yonder, is it not?"

The old gentleman struck his umbrella sharply on the floor.

"It's of no use, Monsieur," he exclaimed, getting more red and excited. "You are taking my portrait, and I object to it. I know you are taking my portrait."

Müller looked up dreamily.

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur," said he. "Did you speak?"

"Yes, Monsieur. I did speak. I repeat that you shall not take my portrait."

"Your portrait, Monsieur?"

"Yes, my portrait!"

"But, Monsieur," remonstrated the artist, with an air of mingled candour and surprise, "I never dreamed of taking your portrait!"

"*Sacre nom!*" shouted the old gentleman, with another rap of the umbrella. "I saw you do it! Everybody saw you do it!"

"Nay, if Monsieur will but do me the hon-

our to believe that I was simply sketching from nature, as the train"

"An impudent subterfuge, sir!" interrupted the old gentleman. "An impudent subterfuge, and nothing less!"

Müller drew himself up with immense dignity.

"Monsieur," he said, haughtily, "that is an expression which I must request you to retract. I have already assured you, on the word of a gentleman"

"A gentleman, indeed! A pretty gentleman! He takes my portrait, and"

"I have not taken your portrait, Monsieur."

"Good heavens!" cried the old gentleman, looking round, "was ever such assurance? Did not every one present see him in the act? I appeal to every one—to you, Monsieur—to you, Mesdames,—to you, reverend father—did you not all see this person taking my portrait?"

"Nay, then, if it must come to this," said Müller, "let the sketch be evidence, and let these ladies and gentlemen decide whether

it is really the portrait of Monsieur—and if they think it like?”

Saying which, he held up the book, and displayed a head, sketched, it is true, with admirable spirit and cleverness, but—the head of an ass, with a thistle in its mouth!

A simultaneous explosion of mirth followed. Even the priest laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, and Dalrymple, heavy-hearted as he was, could not help joining in the general shout. As for the old gentleman, the victim of this elaborate practical joke, he glared at us all round, swore that it was a premeditated insult from beginning to end, and, swelling with suppressed rage, flung himself back into his corner, and looked resolutely in the opposite direction.

By this time we were half-way to Paris, and the student, satisfied with his success, packed up his folio, brought out a great meerscham with a snakey tube, and smoked like a factory-chimney.

When we alighted, it was nearly five o'clock.

"What shall we do next?" said Dalrymple, pulling drearily at his moustache. "I am so deuced dull to-day that I am ashamed to ask anybody to do me the charity to dine with me—especially a *bon garçon* like Herr Müller."

"Don't be ashamed," said the student, laughingly. "I would dine with Pluto himself, if the dishes were good and my appetite as sharp as to-day."

"*Allons* then! Where shall we go; to the *Trois Frères*, or the *Moulin Rouge*, or the *Maison Dorée*?"

"The *Trois Frères*," said Müller, with the air of one who deliberates on the fate of nations, "has the disadvantage of being situated in the Palais Royal, where the band still continues to play at half-past five every afternoon. Now, music should come on with the sweets and the champagne. It is not appropriate with soup or fish, and it distracts one's attention if injudiciously administered with the made dishes."

"True. Then shall we try the *Moulin Rouge*?"

Müller shook his head.

“At the *Moulin Rouge*,” said he, gravely, “one can breakfast well; but their dinners are stereotyped. For the last ten years, they have not added a new dish to their *carte*; and the discovery of a new dish, says Brillat Savarin, is of more importance to the human race than the discovery of a new planet. No—I should not vote for the *Moulin Rouge*.”

“Well, then, Véfours, Véry’s, the Café Anglais?”

“Véfours is traditional; the Café Anglais is infested with English; and at Véry’s, which is otherwise a meritorious establishment, one’s digestion is disturbed by the sight of omniverous provincials, who drink champagne with the *rôti*, and eat melon at dessert.”

Dalrymple laughed outright.

“At this rate,” said he, “we shall get no dinner at all! What is to become of us, if neither Véry’s, nor the *Trois Frères*, nor the *Moulin Rouge*, nor the *Maison Dorée*”

"*Halte-là !*" interrupted the student theatrically ; "for by my halidome, sirs, I said not a syllable in disparagement of the house yclept *Dorée* ! Is it not there that we eat of the crab of Bordeaux, succulent and ro-seate ? Is it not there that we drink of *Veuve Cliquot* the costly, and of that *Johannis-berger*, to which all other hocks are vinegar and water ? Never let it be said that *Franz Müller*, being of sound mind and body, did less than justice to the reputation of the *Maison Dorée*."

"To the *Maison Dorée*, then," said *Dalrymple*, "with what speed and appetite we may ! By Jove ! Herr *Franz*, you are a *connoisseur* in the matter of dining."

"A man who for twenty-nine days out of every thirty pays his sixty-five centimes for two dishes at a student's Restaurant in the Quartier Latin, knows better than most people where to go for a good dinner when he has the chance," said *Müller*, philosophically. "The ragoûts of the Temple—the *arlequins* of the *Cité*—the fried fish of the Odeon arcades—the unknown hashes of

the *guingettes*, and the ‘funeral baked meats’ of the Palais Royal, are all familiar to my pocket and my palate. I do not scruple to confess that in cases of desperate emergency, I have even availed myself of the advantages of *L’hazard*.”

“*L’hazard*,” said I. “What is that?”

“*L’hazard de la fourchette*,” replied the student, “is the resort of the vagabond, the *gamin*, and the *chiffonier*. It lies down by the river-side, near the Halles, and consists of nothing but a shed, a fire, and a caldron. In this caldron a seething sea of oleaginous liquid conceals an infinite variety of animal and vegetable substances. The arrangements of the establishment are beautifully simple. The votary pays his five centimes and is armed by the presiding genius of the place with a huge two-pronged iron fork. This fork he plunges in once:—he may get a calf’s foot, or a potatoe, or a sheep’s head, or a carrot, or a cabbage, or nothing, as fate and the fork direct. All men are gamblers in some way or another, and *L’hazard* is a game of gastronomic chance. But from the

ridiculous to the sublime, it is but a step—and while talking of *L'hazard*, behold, we have arrived at the *Maison Dorée*."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

